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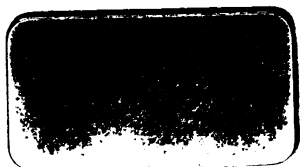
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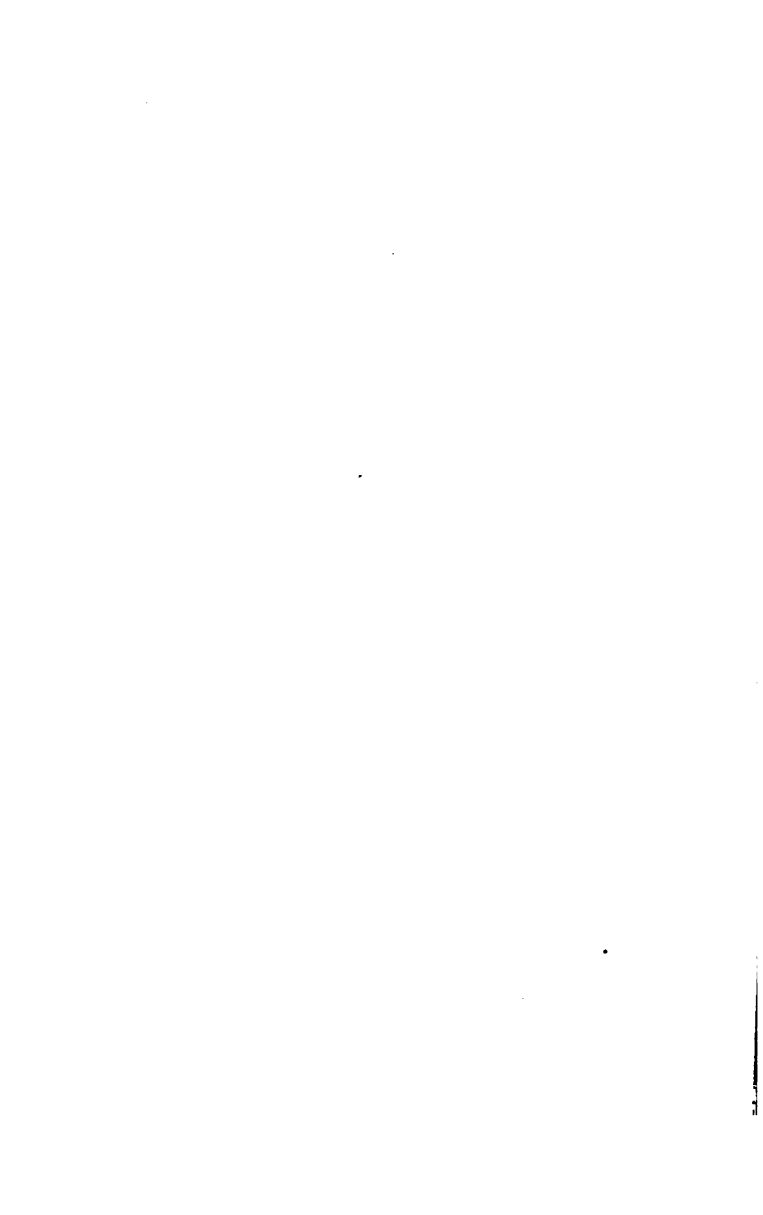
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STEYNE'S GRIEF;

OR,

LOSING, SEEKING AND FINDING.



STEYNE'S GRIEF;

OR,

LOSING, SEEKING AND FINDING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"BOW GARRETS," "FRANK'S MADONNA," "THE LATHAMS,"

"BEN CHEERY," "ONLY A TRIFLE," "HARRIETTE GWYNNE,"

"BITTER BELL," "CLOUD WITNESS," "FERNDELL,"

&c., &c.

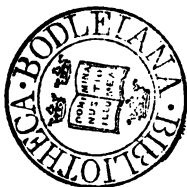
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Dedication.

TO JOHN B. GOUGH, Esq.

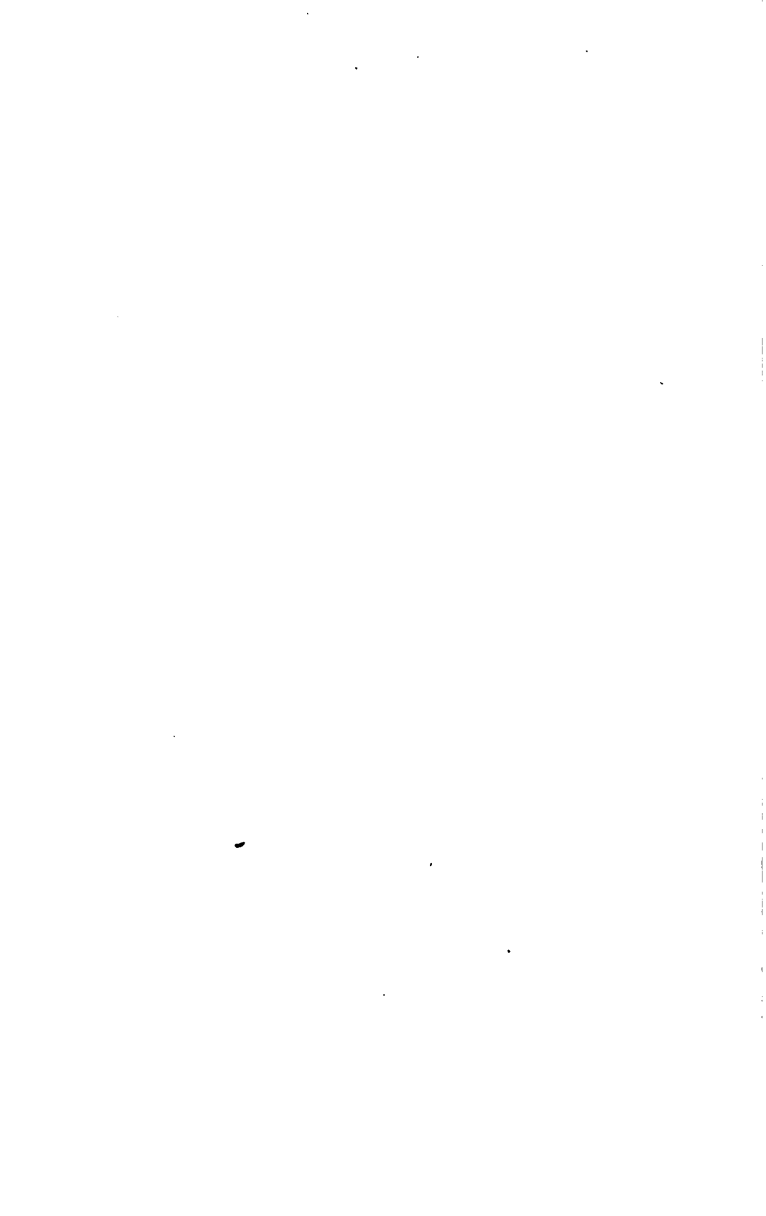
DEAR SIR, — In granting to the introduction of this little volume the high prestige of your name, you have added one more to the many instances of kindness, for some slight acknowledgment of which I take the present opportunity.

To your powerful and convincing eloquence, when first exerted in this country, I owe my appreciation and adoption of the principles of Total Abstinence, and the innumerable benefits therefrom resulting. Your valuable counsel and encouragement cheered and sustained me, in the first painful and uncertain steps of literary venture : to you I must ever gratefully ascribe any success I may be allowed to attain therein.

The honour permitted me, in dedicating to you the production of my pen, while giving rise to regret that it is not more worthy of distinction, also affords the highest incentive for future efforts. As the complimentary tribute due to a name so justly famous, works far outweighing this in merit, origin, and purpose, have doubtless borne with pride a like inscription ; but assuredly none which could with greater sincerity testify to the earnest gratitude and respect of

THE AUTHOR.

London, March 20th, 1860.



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STEYNE'S GRIEF; OR, LOSING, SEEKING, AND FINDING.

PART FIRST.—LOSING.

CHAPTER FIRST.

IN THE PORCH.

“Ay, marry ! marry ! marry ?—‘Mother, what does “marry” mean ?’—‘It means to spin, to bear children, and to weep, my daughter.’—And, of a truth, there is something more in matrimony than the wedding ring !”—LONGFELLOW.

“Aspettare e non venire,
Star in letto e non dormire,
Servire e non gradire,
Son tre cose da morire.”

ITALIAN PROVERB.

“T^e await and hope what cometh not,
To pine for sleep night bringeth not ;
To serve and love where pleaseth not ;
Ah what will sooner kill !”

AUTH. TRANS.

CARY HINTON stood at her door, in the twilight. Perhaps it was because Cary was so pretty, and so very young to assume the honours of wifehood, that she had never yet been accorded the dignity of mistress. Her husband's name was Hinton. She had been lawfully married to him in the sight of half the

village, viz., the female portion; and yet she had never, beyond a time or two, been addressed, or spoken of, as Mrs. Hinton.

One fact there was might have something to do with it; she had lived in the village ever since she was born, somewhere about eighteen years and seven months; and all that time had been known as "Cary." They might have gone a little further, and given her the benefit of "Deering," which stood after it in the parish register; but they hadn't, and so perhaps considered that to concede the matronly title with the surname would be too much of a good thing, and, that the honour might not be overwhelming, contented themselves with the addition of the latter: and "Cary Hinton" was universally accepted.

One thing is certain,—the owner did not trouble herself about the name; if she noticed it at all, the chances are she did not bestow a second thought upon it; ideas so much more important occupied her little head.

The possession of a four-roomed cottage, and garden thereto, with all necessary appurtenances and furniture, by one whose whole experience had been that of a workhouse foundling, and the dependant in a rich, capricious household, would, we may imagine, give ample cause for occupation: but it was not her baking, washing, starching, ironing, cooking, mending, or making, that constituted Cary's chief theme of thought: she was *au fait*, "up," in all these branches of domestic management: they were but pastime to her. The workhouse training had done this for her,—that there was not a better housewife, of even four times her age, in the whole country round.

But there was one thing the workhouse experience had not taught her to manage, and that was a husband; an acquisition which, according to some, calls for a vast deal of management, and of the most skilful kind.

Beauty and good temper cannot but win favour, even in a workhouse; and such kindness as survived among the amount of selfishness and discontent that go to make up the atmosphere of such a place, the merry little girl had the full benefit of; and when she was hired out, there sprang up among the village matrons quite a rivalry as to who should secure Cary Hinton to nurse their babies.

But for all that—though the old place was a long way preferable to any gaol, upon any system that ever was or will be—it was workhouse still; there was restraint and discipline, not of the mildest; and, to a sunshiny little spirit, had so much in it gloomy and forbidding, that it was with a rejoicing heart she left it to be maid to Lady Osteen's daughters; and it was as if a light had gone out from the old house of refuge when she quitted it.

At my lady's the petting soon grew without exception or limit. The young ladies had of course intended to keep their new maid at a distance, let her know her place, and so on: but they found Cary such a gentle, willing, ready, active girl, and withal so little minded to ignore her place, that they gave in, and from one extreme to another, could not make too much of her. Her taste was excellent, her economies not beneath the notice of a baronet's scantily-portioned daughters: they consulted her in all things, and quickly she became a universal favorite.

The widow my lady petted her, the young mis-

tresses petted her, and when young Sir Robert came home, fresh from Rome, Spain, Egypt—*que sais-je?* from the Antipodes mayhap, when more interesting topics had been disposed of, the praises of the new maid were duly sounded in his ears; till, seeing his indifference, and wounded thereat, the young ladies by a sign mutually agreed, and the maid was summoned to the room for some important order; and, after due time allowed for observation, was dismissed; the young ladies all impatient to ask their brother's judgment on their favourite.

Oh, aye! she's well enough, girls," was the reply, with a shrug and a yawn, which annoyed, while it deceived, the young ladies; as it did not the elder one, who caught her son's eye as he turned away, and read there, what made her wish very fervently that she could transport her amiable maid to the Antipodes her son had so lately quitted. But Cary was armed against all the wiles of any Sir Robert, in the most effectual manner; for among the petters had been one who had found more favour in her sight than all the rest put together.

Whether the event was hastened by the sisters' wish to impress their brother with a favourable opinion of their *protégé*, I cannot tell; but the day came when Cary, blushing, and smoothing her apron, came to her young ladies with, "Oh, if you please ma'am—if you please—I'm going, ma'am—I'm going to be—to be married, ma'am, if you please."

Well, if they hadn't pleased it would have been hard, seeing it was the very event they lived, and hoped, and prayed, ate, drank, slept, and dressed for themselves, every day of their lives: so, with a sorry

grace, they gave their kind permission, and the next thing was to know *who*; for the sly puss had been as quiet in that as in the transactions of her everyday life.

"Tom Hinton, ma'am, if you please ma'am;" and down went the eyes, and up rose the blush and the apron-corner.

Mr. Hinton was somewhere under seven feet in height, broad in proportion, and very good proportion, with a great massive head, covered with curly black hair, and a beard to match. The young ladies looked at their pretty little, fair-haired, smiling maid, and wondered—as they would not, if they had had a little more experience in queer human nature, with all its freaks.

Tom Hinton was an importation, among many others, consequent upon a new building mania in Stillhaven, and had been employed—in fact, head man—in some beautifying and alterations at Osteen House. He was a mason, clever in his trade, and had paid impetuous and passionate attentions to the pretty Cary. He was going to settle in the village, the new town promised plenty of work, and so it was all soon arranged: the wedding was superintended by the young ladies—a small consolation for the loss of their maid—and Cary bade them adieu, loaded with presents, and one which she certainly valued more than all, a rare and beautiful singing bird, which the young baronet had brought from abroad, and which she had been accustomed to feed and tend till it grew to know her, and to come to her call.

With all his assiduities the young man had not obtained more than—in reply to a question he put—"Hate him? No; of course she *hated* nobody."

As for anything else ! why she had eyes and ears but for her husband. Head but to think for him ; feet but to tend upon him ; hands but to serve him. In Cary's nature was a strong infusion of that dangerous, saving, terrible, precious gift (as it is used or mis-used), imagination. Be certain she had not neglected the opportunity of fostering it, by all the means accessible, in the shape of such reading as lay open to her. But, fortunately for her, poor child, her bent was not toward the grand, the great, or luxurious : she had visions, certainly, bright ones, but lighted up, not with the diamond rays of wealth and splendour, only with the radiance of loving eyes ; a little romance she *had* built ; but one so innocent, and one that should be so attainable—God pardon our fallen nature that hinders that of which He gave us the first example.

Cary's ambition was a model home, and a model husband. The latter of course she had got ; and it should not be her fault if she had not the other ; to this end she devoted her whole existence, every hour of it.

And, to do her justice, her house was a little pattern of neatness, cleanliness, and good taste ; and she, in her smart trim dresses, the ruling spirit of the whole.

Huge Tom was pleased too with his pretty toy, and with her slave-like dutiful homage. It was altogether a new sensation for Tom, and one that suited his fancy amazingly.

He came home night after night, straight from work ; and positively did not go out again. It was so capital to have some one to pull off his heavy boots and his rough blouse ; and the easy slippers seemed

an importation from fairyland, of which the queen was at his elbow, or on his knee, cooing ("purring," Charles Reade would say; though as that is suggestive of uneasy ideas of claws and teeth, we can't like it), smoothing his rough head, stroking his shaggy beard; administering the nicest of tea, and the sweetest of bread and butter; and then, when seated in the shady window, filling his pipe, and reading to him the news, so easy and fast to what he could for himself.

The man is no man who will wonder when we say that for six whole months Tom Hinton's corner at the "Bluebottle" was vacant, except on Saturday evenings, and then only for a short time; for hadn't she then the nicest little supper prepared that ever came under eyes or nose of mortal man, to tempt him (which she would by no means touch till he came); and his beer and all fetched, and maybe a drop of something a little stronger, which Cary would just make a pretence of sipping to please him.

Her little heart sang jubilees all to itself, and basked in its own sunshine for the triumph she had gained; despite all the cavilling of the gossips, who had warned her she would "spoil" her husband; that "she should begin as she meant to go on;" and a good deal more of the same sort: but Cary proved them all wrong, and she was right, and the happiest creature alive.

By-and-by, just one evening out of the seven, Tom would be missing from the shady window after tea; then the exceptions got to be when he was there; and the "Bluebottle" again rejoiced over its man. Then from the little table supper was many times cleared away untasted; and, oftener than not, *one* cup and saucer were returned to the cupboard

unstained. Still the little wife went on ; still sang her cheerful song ; not quite so briskly though—still got ready dainty dinners ; still gathered the choicest flowers to deck the table at tea and supper time ; still dressed as carefully ; and as tenderly pulled off the heavy boots, and folded the workman's blouse.

For the girl had faith in that which she felt would be, with her, all-powerful—kindness—and the gleam of poetry in her composition disposed her still to serve and love ; where thanks even were not her earnings.

Came the day twelvemonth from that on which they had been married. Poor Cary would fain have kept it with some little ceremony or treat. But the only ceremony at which she assisted was that of helping a drunken man to his bed ; and the treat, a solitary supper, and a night of tears spent in an arm-chair by his bedside.

The neighbours took it as an affront that she did not run from one to another of them, proclaiming her tribulations ; Cary would have died first.

Secure in her own scheme of happiness, she had given up all other companionship, and rarely exchanged more than a civil word with those in the village.

“ As if we couldn't see ! ” said they.

“ We're not blind ! ”—

“ Going on as if he was as good as good ”—

“ I'd let him see, I would so ! ”

They viewed it as a species of hypocrisy, that the poor lass should try to wear a smiling face over a troubled soul.

“ See, now, I telled her she'd please her eye, if she bruised her heart ; and I do think she ha' done't.”

Hinton was a good workman, and had presumed

upon it ; being held, indeed, at higher estimate than he was worth, till the arrival of a new man from London, who possessed considerable architectural knowledge, and united great natural taste and ability to experience in the higher fields of his art.

Hinton would not forgive this one his superiority ; and he revenged himself for every fresh advance in the new man's popularity by going on the spree ; leaving work a week at a time, and drinking as long as he had a penny, or a pennyworth of credit was to be got.

So matters went on ; and those in the village who knew pretty well what was the cost of such luxuries, wondered how Cary Hinton managed to keep the house over her head, for they didn't believe she " saw the colour of his money very often, and none of the things went out o' th' house."

Poor Cary ! she would have starved sooner than they should :—the pretty home she had thought so much of ! But she and the pawnbroker's at Stillhaven were, alas ! " well acquaint ;" and on its shelves reposed all the presents of her kind young mistresses, her few little ornaments, and such dresses as would fetch anything at all, though she still continued to look neat ; but she had given up seeming to be happy ; she was very pale, and cried a good deal alone.

As she stood at the door, this evening, she was waiting, looking, watching, as she had got used to doing now, when a man came riding by on horseback. She looked up, and knew him,—Mr. Crichton, of the " Bluebottle."

" Ah !" she thought, " it's some of Tom's money now, that keeps him, his horse, and all that. Ah ! he

would be none the worse, surely, for wanting such a bit ; it would be all the difference to us. I wonder if it would be any good just to speak to him, and ask him not to let Tom have any more? I wish I dared."

But the courage was wanting, till, as he was passing her door, Crichton slackened his pace, to look at a fine tree which grew between Hinton's garden and a piece of waste that skirted it. He stopped and inquired of her to which it belonged?

She answered him, and then, screwing up her courage, rushed at once into her grievance ; told him how she was waiting up for her husband ; how that he was regular enough, and good enough when he did not drink, and—"oh ! sir," she went on—"if you would be so kind as to tell them not to serve him with it. It wouldn't make that difference to you, sir ; they say you've got plenty ; and it would be every thing to us,—indeed it would, sir !"

"Why ! Mrs. Hinton, I am surprised at you," was the answer, so coldly given that the girl's heart fluttered as though she had committed crime—"you must know I cannot send my customers away, any more than another tradesman. If your husband does not use my house, he will go elsewhere."

"No, sir ; he's so handy to the 'Bluebottle' where he works. Ah ! sir, if you would but tell him——"

"Your husband must know his own business best, Mrs. Hinton ; I cannot send away my customers. Good evening, ma'am." He lifted his hat, and rode away.

"I might have known it, I might !" cried poor

Cary, aloud: "Don't they call him the 'hard man?'" and now I have made bad worse—and yet, oh dear! what can I do? Oh, Tom! Tom! I would not serve you so; I would not, indeed!"

She was weary—wearied of serving, watching, hoping, in vain. Every day seemed but to confirm the vice of her husband; every day involved her in some fresh dilemma. She looked back upon her former life; the discipline and confinement of the one part, the indulgence and kindness of the other. Then she remembered all her little plans of happiness, so rudely broken; her head sank upon her hands, and she began to cry.

It was now dark, and in the porch where she sat the shrubs screened the road and gate from view. Suddenly a hand was laid upon her head. She did not start, nor even look up; she had heard no step on the path, but the action was not her husband's.

"Oh! sir, why have you come again?" she said, through her tears.

"To tell you all I have before, and twenty times as much, my sweet girl, if I can but ease your trouble one instant," said he who stood before her,—a handsome fair-haired young man, of appearance and style unexceptionable.

Cary shook her head. "You must not come; indeed, sir, you must not! What would your lady mother say? Oh! sir, do not come any more."

"You are crying now, my poor girl! What new trouble is there?"

Sobbing, she told him of her appeal to the publican.

The gentleman laughed bitterly—"What, move the heart of the Admirable! Oh, no! Even your sweet face would not do that. He loves his hard cash too

well. You must not do so again, dear one. He is not worth it ; let him go his own way as he will."

She stood up, and wiped her eyes.

" You are not going ?" he asked.

" Indeed, Sir Robert, I must ; and pray do not come again. I begged of you the other night not to. My husband——"

" Your husband !" he interrupted, indignantly——
" that ever *you* should call that drunken brute husband——"

She moved away——" I can't hear you call him bad names, for he *is* my husband, and I would give my life to have him sober and happy—I would !" She burst into crying again ; and he was at her side, wiping away the tears as they came faster, stealing an arm about her, drawing her head gently to him, with such comfort as she, poor child, could but faintly resist, with his earnest soft tones in her ear——

" Oh Cary ! dear one !——every tear of yours goes to my heart. My poor darling, you have suffered so long——you are killing yourself——why will you throw away the happiness that is offered you ? Love, and truth, and kindness, dearest——one who worships you offers them all. Oh, dear girl, why will you make me so wretched by witnessing your misery ? I who only desire your welfare——"

She lifted up her head, and struggled with her sobs to say——" Please sir, go ; please *do* not come again——*pray* don't !——"

But he held her hands, and she could not close the door. He hurried on in his impetuous whisper——
" Do not drive me away ; how can you exist thus ?——none to love you ; *he* does not care for you——"

She screamed as if a blow had been struck—"Oh, don't say so!—he does love me! he must love me—"

"Love you!—" he repeated, scornfully—"would he act so? would he make your life a misery if he loved you? Could I treat you so, think you? Answer me, dear one, do you believe it?—"

"Oh, it's the drink, sir; indeed Tom was always good and kind till he took to the drink: and he's never unkind in it all!"

"Cary, you cannot deceive me. Not one night, not two, but many; aye every night, when you have little dreamed of it, I have been near you. I have seen him come home; I have heard his coarse, hard blustering, and abuse. My hands have trembled to give him the punishment he so richly deserves. Unkind! Why when his brain is on fire he does not scruple what he does: he will murder you one day, my poor girl!"

"No, no! he never struck me in his life—he never could—"

The young man ground his teeth, as he said—"Could! no, not unless he was the devil he is. Oh Cary, love, dear girl, if not for your own sake, for mine——"

But she had drawn her hand away, and was closing the door almost upon him, sobbing, as she did so—"Please go, sir, and don't come again, for I must not speak to you; indeed I must not!"

The young man turned away, with an impatient gesture; but he remained in the little garden under cover of the shrubs.

A shadow upon the blind crossed the window; it dropped into a chair, and the head sank forward into the hands. But the despair that spoke in the attitude

was nothing to the desolation in the poor girl's heart which those words, "he does not care for you," had caused. They were but the utterance of a conviction, which, alas, she had slowly and fearfully admitted to herself; but now the truth seemed thrust so terribly upon her, and that so coolly, so undeniably, in the words of another.

Her very spirit was crushed. It seemed a thing too horrible to be true, and still she knew in her innermost soul it was so: and that her gentleness, her love, her winning kindness, had been all in vain.

"No one to love her"—The words forced themselves upon her, rang in her brain, and caused an agony which I should in vain attempt to describe to those who have not themselves experienced it; and these will know too well how vain are words to express the suffering.

"Oh, poor dear Tom, that I have loved so, and cared for so dearly—poor Tom, poor Tom!"—

Loving him more in remembering her own care of him, forgetting herself in pitying him, she scarce knew why?

"When he was ill, and all, I nursed him. Oh! he might love me! Oh, Tom, dear poor Tom!"

The bird, whom her voice never failed to arouse, was answering her sobs with a low chirrupping song; she rose, went to its cage, and opened it. The little creature hopped upon her finger, and trilled out sweet consolation there, while she leaned her cheek against its smooth breast. It was something to have the affection even of a bird.

The treacherous shadow on the blind showed this, an eloquent tableau to one who lingered without.

Her eye fell on the seed plants which adorned the cage, and carried her thoughts to those who brought them. "I wish I could dare go and see Mrs. Stayne," she said to herself, "she has often asked me; I'm sure she is a good woman, so different to the rest, that only think of abusing him."

A heavy foot sounded on the path outside. In an instant the pet was in its cage, and she at the door. Some one at the same moment leaped the fence into the waste on the opposite side.

Hinton walked quite steadily in, and his young wife looked in his face with a gleam of hope; but it died out again when she saw the scowl and heard the muttered curses.

"What's thee up for this time o'night?"

"I was waiting for you, Tom. Will you have some supper?"

"Curse thee, and the supper too!" And he bumped himself into a chair, and leaned his elbows on the table. "—— him, I'll let him see, I will so!—I'll let him know what it is to cross my path!"

Cary trembled.

"What dost stand gawping there for? Hast nothing to do? a lazy wench as thee is," he growled.

She turned away, the tears coming fast to her eyes.

Tom sat muttering to himself for a few minutes, then with an oath he started up, and with one blow of his fist cracked the little table across the middle; then kicked the chair into a corner, smashing the back—"I'll murder him! I will!—I'll knock his cursed head off!"

He rushed to the door—Cary, with a scream, flew after him, and caught him by his blouse.

"What do thee mean? the devil take thee!"—he turned fiercely upon her. "And thee's thick with the scamp, too; his brats was here a bit since."

Her hand fell, the blood came back to her heart—

"Do you mean the Steynes?" she said.

"And who should I mean else? A sneaking upstart, as comes to take a honest man's bread out of 's mouth, and set up over them as is his masters. If ever I catches any of the brood inside my door it'll be the worse for them and thee too. I know thee's thick wi'm, but thee'd best keep clear, so I tell thee."

"It was only the children, Tom, brought me some stuff for my bird, and Mrs. Steyne——"

"Hang the whole lot I tell thee! I'll not have 'em here; I warrant I'll let 'em see if they're to rule the roast. What dost stand gawping there for? Go to bed, I say."

Shuddering she crept upstairs to her unblessed chamber, her lord and master remaining below to nurse his wrath; dread kept her from closing her eyes, though she was fain to pretend she slept when she heard him lumbering up, certain otherwise of his abuse should she dare to be awake.

CHAPTER SECOND.

RATHER PLEASANT, ALTHOUGH "QUARTER-DAY."

"I flee the crowded town !
 I cannot breathe shut up within its gates !
 Air—I want air, and sunshine, and blue sky :
 The feeling of the breeze upon my face,
 And no walls but the far-off mountain tops ;
 Then I am free and strong—once more myself."

LONGFELLOW.

I IMAGINE there are not many whose experience could allow them largely to endorse the heading of this chapter. No day in all the calendar, as a rule, less calculated to conjure up—

Pleasant images, than "quarter-day,"
 Whichever side we take.

The confiding in coming payments ; the putting faith in promises ; the anticipation of cash long due, up to the last moment, as certain all to fail ; the frantic recourse, at the eleventh hour, to expedients which but twenty-four hours ago would have been deemed simply impracticable ; the final failure ; the humiliating necessity of tendering, accompanied with apologies, something considerably under the lawful offering ; the freezing reminder that *less* than *the* sum is useless—the cash at the same time ruthlessly pocketed ; your ignoble exit, with a mentally registered vow that never will you so play the honest fool again as to leave yourself penniless for as little thanks

as though empty handed ;—these are a few of the reminiscences familiar to those cumberers of the earth, the unfortunates “behindhand with the world,” and who might, like poor Trotty, well persuade themselves that they “have no business here.”

Less unpleasant, certainly, though more productive of grumbling, the office of sitting in wait for these sorry defaulters ; the expectations, certain of being disappointed (because always beyond probability) ; the listening to interminable excuses ; demands of the payers in full, for new additions or improvements ; the haggling of some for reductions, claimed for mythical repairs or outlay incurred ; the intelligence of deteriorated property ; the complaints of quarrelsome neighbours ; the unwelcome warning of the best tenant,—are a few of the spectres with which memory so plentifully peoples the “quarter-day” of even the more fortunate.

Then the “flittings,” as our northern friends have it, the removals, the breakages, the spoiling, the unrighteous appropriation of “unconnected,” though very essential, household trifles ; the discomfort, the colds, the coughs, the wasted time and money,—are not these among the “sunny memories” with which “quarter-day” is associated, even in the minds of the wo——, we beg pardon, the ladies ?

And we now claim the indulgence of our readers while we discourse of events, some six months previous to the date of our first chapter.

The harvest had been good ; and, strange to say, the bread had not risen in consequence. Wages, too, were as liberal as ever they had been even “in my father’s time,” and for the last eight months there had

been even more work than hands to do it; so there was every reason why sufficient should be forthcoming to answer all legitimate demands, and why "quarter-day" should be minus a great many disagreeabilities in Stillhaven this Midsummer. Not that it was by any means a common occurrence for Stillhaven to offer such a premium to willing workers. Till within the last two years, though bright its skies, and white its shingly beach, and genial its soft breezes, as at the present time, it had been rather one of the neglected gems than otherwise; and its inhabitants, in their quiet farm-houses and cottages, led a primitive life enough, although almost within sight and sound of a large seaport town.

But who shall prescribe or limit the working of cause and effect?

The Grand Vizier of Bagdad made the purchase of a surpassingly lovely Circassian beauty as an addition to his harem; and lo! little Stillhaven became great.

And this is how:—

The lovely Circassian, "scarce sixteen years old," was presumptuous and ungrateful enough to testify a disinclination for the society of her generous patron, a venerable, indulgent, amorous connoisseur in beauty, not above seventy at most. Deaf to all coaxing, proof against petting, indifferent alike to homied words and jewelled offerings, the captive beauty dared to have a will of her own: she sulked, rebelled, and, finally, harsher measures being threatened, she became obstreperous and violent, and so worked herself into a fever, as many a beauty has done for less cause.

A fever under such circumstances, and in such a country, is no joke, more particularly when we take

into account that irritant—a prior engagement, (which there certainly was). A host of duly qualified doctors was gathered about the fair patient, and each having a vivid idea of *the* sack before his eyes, in case of failure, vied with the other in remedies.

And so the disease gained ground at a gallop, became infectious, spread through the harem; carried off the ladies in dozens—leaving a sad prospect for the fair rebel when she should recover; and just as that seemed probable, and her lord was rejoicing thereat, the fever carried him off in its course through the city, which it decimated. Of course, there was an English vessel in the nearest harbour, and of course English sailors were running about the town, and as certainly they took the fever; and some died, and some got well; and in the chattels of the deceased, or the blood or atmosphere of the living, the disease was imported, in a modified form, into the seaport town over against Stillhaven.

Numbers fell sick; not a few died; the merchants' and well-to-do families were scared; and the mammas fled with their little ones in all directions, seeking purer air, fewer neighbours, and safety from contagion. And it entered into the head of a certain follower of Hippocrates, to recommend Stillhaven to such of his patients as actually did recover, for pure air, sheltered bathing, and, in short, every desideratum of a convalescent, which were, it seems, united more especially in one locality, called "Piert's Rest;" where, by one of those singular coincidences which *do* sometimes occur, the doctor had some houses, which in an unguarded moment he had been tempted to purchase, and which had often caused the good man to sin, in

heartily cursing his own folly, since, being a class of building wholly unsuited to the requirements of the inhabitants, they had lain a dead loss upon his hands, all unoccupied save one, which was tenanted by his aged mother and sister.

If the sweet little village had not been all they represented it—if even it had not been washed by the waves, and sheltered by the rocky shore, and visited by the balmiest breezes—still it was the snuggest, pleasantest, healthiest little retreat of any in all England—novelty would have done much with that scared, anxious, town-sick multitude.

But it was genuine ; it was all that could be desired, and they only marvelled they had not sooner discovered it. They forgot how fashion had blinded them.

“Piert’s Rest” was filled ere long—the old lady and her daughter in a state of siege, and they were soon “induced by urgent requests of their friends” to “spare” part of their house, where for years they had gone to bed quailing with terror of the solitude and dreariness.

Every available room in farm-house or cottage throughout Stillhaven was occupied by the more fortunate, while numbers were compelled to seek asylum in some less genial spot.

So Stillhaven became famous.

And not for that season only.

The ladies vowed they had never been so well ; the children had never eaten so much, and cried so little ; the young folks, to whom the place was endeared by the flirtations got up in the months spent there—for they will flirt amid sickness, aye, and death ; and convalescence favours it—they lent their persuasions ;

and so the husbands and fathers began to see it in a right light.

Ground was let and sold, at wonderful prices; speculative brains found ample field for employment. Here a church, there an hotel, and certainly a concert hall.

Advertisements brought you face to face with Stillhaven,—the fare to Stillhaven by coach and boat—the air of Stillhaven—the bathing of Stillhaven—the lodgings of Stillhaven—till Stillhaven threatened to become a bore.

Stillhaven was the fashion. Hippocrates blessed himself, and would have blessed the rebellious little Circassian, had he known all about it.

It is pleasant to know that the spirited beauty got the better of the fever, and, her old lover being dead, made the best of her way to her own land, and the younger one, when—it is to be hoped—they blessed Allah, and fulfilled their destiny.

And this is how it fell out that rents were paid, this quarter-day, right punctually; and the great man's steward wore a more smiling aspect than he had done for many a day; for the good folks of Stillhaven were wont to be slow, if sure, in money matters.

And, of all others, this day was an excuse for a general gossiping and news-hunting. So much was doing, so much to be done; so many speculations afoot; and the men being all pretty well employed just now, a great many had deputed their wives to take the quarterly offering to the great house which held territorial sway over the larger part of the old habitations.

On such an occasion be sure good cheer was not

wanting, nor stinted; nor were the smart village dames at all backward in profiting by the refreshment, doubly acceptable after a three or four mile walk under a fierce midsummer sun.

To become communicative and hospitably inclined, even beyond ordinary, was the natural result.

So as they returned home in groups and couples, tea-tables were largely spread; and, while awaiting absent husbands, tongues wagged freely of all that had been seen, said, and done—those who had remained at home eager for every scrap of information there-upon.

“Thee should ha’ seen Dickey Glossop; eh! he did look soft when steward sauced him for bringing so little. He eyed the money as though he’d a mind to take it back.”

“Poor Dickey! he’s never a shilling scarce to bless hisself: it was a mercy he could bring that past the ale-house.”

“They say as Mister Crichton, at the inn, is for taking the ale-house at Piert’s Best and making it into a grand place.”

But all eyes were now turned upon one object—at all times one of peculiar interest in a country village. A well-packed van of goods came labouring slowly up the gravelly road. The furniture, where the coverings permitted it to be seen, appeared good and handsome; at the back of the cart sat a little boy and girl, who were gazing about them with all the curiosity of strangers.

“Who be that, think ye?” cried a gossip, who had run up from her own door to join the confab.

“Eh, I canna tell.”

"Nor me," said another; "but the things look good, don't 'em?"

All were straining their eyes, and stretching their necks, to follow the progress of the cart.

"It's gone past the Creek," said one, who had crossed the road to obtain a last glimpse; "and there's no houses past there, till you come to Piert's Rest."

"But there be never a house empty in Piert's Rest, and Mrs. Crump was telling me as not a room was to be had even, for love or money."

"Well, she's coming to tea wi' me this evening, and she's safe to know."

"Here be Master Sandford coming; he'll be like to know."

"Eh, wenches! but it be right warm," said the jolly farmer, as he drew near, abating something of his giant stride, and wiping his head and face. "And who be backbiting and evil-speaking of now? Tell us, then we'll know who be good and pretty for one."

"Nay, Master Sandford, it's yon cart."

"Who be coming, do tell?"

"Is it gentlefolk, Master Sandford?"

"Well, well; ho! ho!" laughed the old man: "this be about the first time in my life as I known a lot o' women folk to be o' one mind. Them things? why, 'tis the new man from Lunnun, as is to set 'em all right at the buildings yonder; and to finish the church, and set up this grand hall they talks on."

"Eh, sure! is that them?"

"From London!"

"Eh, but they've good things!"

"And where are they going to be?"

"At the small house as stands all to itself, wi' the trees about it—there beyond Piert's Rest—going on to Piert's Creek—hi' Birdiethorn."

"Birdiethorn!"

"Th' haanted place!"

"Aye, it will be haunted, I reckon, sure enow, wi' them two youngsters I see behind the cart but now."

"Eh! I would not—see, I would not live in that place—not if they'd pay me no end of money."

"Nor me; why, there's no one lived in it these six years, to my knowledge."

"They'd get it cheap," laughed the old farmer.

"Cheap! my word, it would be dear at nought."

"I wouldn't be in by day; and at night—Ugh!"

"They say there's a cave, or such like, goes right under the sea."

"Aye, and when the smugglers was here!"

"Aye, and in th' old times, when Piert's gang had it, many's the cruel murder's been there, and the bodies got shet of."

"I mind one tale of a lady as was throwed alive——"

"Nay, it was the babe!——"

"Nay! the lady, and she rises——"

"Aye—All-hallows eve——"

"Nay!—'tis Candlemas——"

"All-hallows—and the moans——"

"Aye, in the cave——"

"And the name isna Birdiethorn at a'—'tis Bludie-thorn; at least it wur——"

"Mrs. Darby! Mrs. Darby!" shouted the old farmer, with difficulty making himself heard above the tumult of excited tongues. "Your good man be nigh

handy by now ; him and me left th' hall together, he'll be here in a crack."

"Eh ! sakes, and my fire's out, for sure !" and away skeltered Dame Darby.

"Here's your master," said the mistress of the house, as a group of men turned the corner ; tell him, you and him's to tea with me ; Mrs. Crump should be here by now."

"Eh, there's my chap," said another.

"And mine."

"And mine."

The group of gossips dispersed like a covey of partridges.

"Ha ! ha !" laughed the old farmer, as he strode on. "Talk of ghosts—I wonder, now, if all the ghosts, as ever was born or thought on, did a body half the mischief as the blessed tongues o' these women folk. A house, or a human creature, one o' themselves, be all one ; they'll not leave it so much as its name, an' they can help it ; and, dear heart, I reckon we men folk catches it now and again above a bit, Lord help us ! ha ! ha !"

CHAPTER THIRD.

BIRDIETHORN.

"Childhood, happiest stage of life,
 Free from care and free from strife ;
 Free from Memory's ruthless reign,
 Fraught with scenes of former pain ;
 Free from Fancy's cruel skill,
 Fabricating future ill ;
 How thy long-lost hours I mourn,
 Never, *never* to return !"

SCOTT.

THE cart kept on its leisurely course ; over the small bridge which spanned the "Creek ;" through the beautiful and more exclusive quarter of "Piert's Rest," with its mingling of quaint farm-house and ancient stone buildings, modernised and beautified by the taste of wealthy occupants, with now and again a *cottage orné* half buried in trees, and pleasant glimpses here and there of flower-beds, rustic arbours and all the belongings of wealth and luxury. But all seemed slumbering under the sultry rays of an unclouded summer sun. A straw hat, a green parasol, a white dress, did occasionally gleam out from the thickest of these shady coverts ; where some fair reader had, perhaps, stolen away to enjoy a favourite book ; but these were rare objects : all was so still, the lazy wash of the waves upon the beach, at some distance from this point, might be distinctly heard.

Even in the fields which lay on one side of the road for a short distance, the haymakers had rested from their task and slept under the spreading tree, whose

leaves seemed to share their slumbers, so motionless was the air.

The driver of the cart plodded heavily along; and for all that one could see to the contrary, he and his horses might have been pursuing their journey in a state of somnambulism.

But there were two, at least, who were, to all intents and purposes, wide awake to every beauty of the scene, to every feature of the country; so new, so beautiful to them; fresh from a large and busy town.

The children, who occupied the seat at the back of the van, were a boy of about nine, and a girl some four years younger. His arm was round her, and her straw hat, which she had taken off in that buoyant feeling of freedom which the first breath of country air imparts, lay on his knees. Their young eyes were busy in observing, their little tongues in eagerly noting to one another all they beheld upon their slow and pleasant progress.

"Look, Rose, look there! there's pears on that tree; look, how thick! and oh, look at the cherries! all ripe and red; oh, Rosey, it is beautiful! isn't it?"

"My Phil! my Phil! fowers! fowers!" cried the child, clapping her tiny hands and pointing to a flower-garden they were passing, rich in summer wealth.

"Oh, and see the hay, how nice it smells! look, Rosey, the men are asleep under the trees; and look at the dog! look at the dog, Rose, lying on his master's coat to watch it! like a picture, isn't it, Rosey?"

Again the child clapped her hands; then, sliding one arm round her brother, she looked up into his face with a laugh of the very fulness of delight.

They had now left behind them the fashionable portion of "Piert's Rest;" the road bore inland, the coast running high between that and the beach; with an almost imperceptible ascent it led on through the picturesque and open country.

Here, too, were the shops, which had sprung into existence upon the improved fortunes of Stillhaven, and which were dependent more particularly upon the patronage of "Piert's Rest," affording an odd contrast, the expensively-finished plate-glass fronts and well-appointed fittings of the eager speculators, with the primitive establishment of the old resident still keeping his ground with stubborn belief in his aboriginal rights; while, to judge from appearances, the whole town might have been garrisoned for a twelvemonth from the accumulated stores of these sanguine dealers. No less singular was it to note how the old and new met here, as it were, upon neutral ground, and setting forth their several claims:—here a handsome piece of wide solid pavement with a massive lamp set up in front, a fashionable scraper and mat at the door, and a brass plate, may be, bearing the name and calling of the occupant: there the gravelly walk with its fringe of straggling weeds, and a venerable tree or two still left standing in front of the doors of these quaint tenements with their diamond-latticed panes, half hatch, and thatched roof, causing a twinge almost painful to a thoughtful passer-by unconcerned in the question of the gain to be derived from the uprooting of these ancient drowsy remnants of the past.

And now the driver of the cart, waking, as it might be, out of his walking nap, stopped, simultaneously

with his cattle before one house, a corner one, it seemed the last of this outlying suburb.

There was a row of fine elms before the door, beneath which stood a horse-trough, coeval, it might be, with the seedling time of its venerable neighbours, and at the end of these a tall sign-post bearing a sign, of which all that could be made out was the faint semblance of a face and two fierce-looking eyes, and the words—more to be guessed at than read—"Piert's Rest."

A bench and table stood before the door, which, wide open, gave to view a spacious apartment—half bar, half kitchen—where, even at that season, a fire burned clear and smokeless in the grate, and upon the settle aside sat a man smoking a pipe.

At the door a stout pleasant-looking woman, in snowy-white cap and apron, was scattering some grain to a well-conditioned tribe of chickens; at sight of which a flock of pigeons, who had been sunning themselves on the thatch, condescended to lounge down and invite themselves to a share.

A large white cat lay stretched upon the bench at the door, unmindful of the wiles of her two hopeful offspring, who alternately gambolled and fought beneath the seat.

It was a picture of perfect repose rarely seen in an atmosphere wont to be tumultuous and impure; for "Piert's Rest," though spoken of as "ale-house," fell short in none of the requirements of a liquor-seller's. You might get there "as good French brandy as ever was tasted;" and I make no doubt but its roomy cellar, more resembling a smuggler's cave than a spirit vault, would not have refused a bottle of wine at a demand.

But so still, so tranquil, even to the two green leaves just dropped from the old elm, toying in the clear water of the trough, which the thirsty horses eye so wistful, even to the bed of pinks beneath the side window giving out their sweet fragrance, all breathes of innocence and peace.

"Eh! sakes! who would ha' thought o' seeing thee, John Bowden; why, is't thee or thee's ghost!" said the smiling landlady, looking up, as the cart stopped at the door, and the driver laid down his whip and threw his hat upon the bench.

"Why, it's nigh two year since I set eyes on thee, lad; and how hast fared the while; eh, thee looks hearty for sure, but a bit tired out. Sit thee down now, sit thee down; and what'll thee take?"

"Nay, I'll not sit down, Mistress Mabblerly; for, do you see, I mun be jogging; these here's to be at Birdiethorn yonder, and it's nigh sundown, and I looks for the master hisself along every minute. I will but gie' the beasts a sup, and take a sup mysel', for I'm fair dry, I am so."

"Aye, sure!" said the jolly landlady, and, popping in and out again with a movement quicker than could have been expected of her bulk, she presented the carter with a jug of foaming ale, in which his whole visage was quickly hidden.

"Eh! that's good!" said he, with a sigh of gratification, as he wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his smock-frock; and proceeded to bestow upon his horses their privilege likewise.

"Dost say these be going to Birdiethorn?" said the dame; "then I shana' be sorry to see the place like life again; it has been fair lonesome and dreary these

five, aye six, years, since the choleree took off the poor Captain's family: there's been a deal of things said this way and that again the place; but I never give no heed to it myself. Well, well, the changes a body do see! why, thee'd scarce know the place down yonder as thee come through."

"Nay, I didna', for sure."

"Eh, it's nought to what they be doing up here, a bit on—new houses, and shops; and a grand hall and a new church is laid out, they say. Aye, well; give me the old church, John Bowden, as I were christened and married in, and my mother afore me; and where my dear man, God rest him! lies now, where I hope to lie wi' him; I'll set foot in none o' their new churches, not I!"

As the good woman raised her apron to her eyes, to brush away a tear—not an unfrequent tribute to the memory of her lost helpmate—she caught sight of the children, and in a minute was at the back of the van.

"Eh! sakes, John Bowden! why hadna thee said these pretty ones was here, now? Poor lambs, they're fair broiled, I know in the sun all this while! Bless thee's sweet face!" (kissing Rose :) "thee'll have a sup of milk." And almost as she spoke she disappeared in the house, returning immediately with a large mug of milk and a piece of cake for each. Then, with smiles and kind words encouraging the very shy children to accept the welcome refreshment, she stood with an arm round little Rose, still chatting to Bowden, who, having replenished the jug, was in no hurry to move.

"It fair wearies me to see nought but changes and changes in th' good place, John Bowden, where I ha'

lived now nigh forty years; I'm fair heart-sick, and it's like I'll be the next change mysel'. Thee'll not find owd Piert's Rest an thee comes this road another twelvemonth time."

"Nay, nay, Mistress Mabberly, thee dinna tell me true!"

"True enough, true enough, John Bowden: they're agate o' making this poor owd place a grand inn, or such like, and let 'em—i' God's name, let 'em!"

The old dame's eloquence could go no further; she was silent. By this time the ale was finished, and the horses, which had revelled in their less dubious draughts, now raised their heads, with a snort; while the water streamed from their panting nostrils in little showers, they shook their huge necks, tossed their manes, refreshed, and quietly turned to their task once more.

At that moment a horse and rider came slowly up the gently ascending road; the latter, as he passed the little group, nodded to the old landlady, and she returned a very frigid curtsy.

"That's him, John Bowden," she said, as the rider passed on; "that's him as will ne'er rest till he gets old 'Piert's' into his hands. That's Master Crichton, as owns the biggest public-house in a' Stillhaven; and they tell me is opening a new one up yonder, the other side o' th' town at Greenharbour. He's a finger in well nigh everything as is afoot, and has put down more money than e'er a one for the new church at Piert's Rest; and yet they say he lost a fortune in Liverpool, and hadna a penny when he came out. He's been here times out o' mind, and he's set his heart upon this; so let him have't. I doubt it'll ne'er do

better than it did wi' my poor man. But he's gone; and it's but lone for me; and I'm not what I was; and the bit o' time I am to be here, I'd be like to rest me. Well, goodbye, John Bowden; thee'll look in as thee comes back. Here's Dickey Glossop, same as ever, having his nap in chimney corner; he'll be waking in a bit. Take care of the little ones; goodbye, darlings."

The good dame shook her hand to the children, who had been absorbed in contemplation of the real live chickens and pigeons, pecking and flying about—not hung up by the heels with bloody heads and ruffled feathers. The cart creaked, and then moved on more briskly; the water in the old trough settled away into its former tranquillity, and the two little leaves slept upon its surface. The pigeons resumed the operations of the toilette, their gratulatory notes soothing the old cat into resuming her slumbers once more; and old "Piert's" was still again.

The brow of the hill once turned, they moved along with something more of animation; the horses seemed to have made up their minds to see the end of this journey before night; the driver whistled a cheery tune, with whip-cracking accompaniment; for the ale was strong, the journey nearly over; and he had visions of a supper that night, of which, for old acquaintance sake, dame Mabberly would bear the cost.

They had just left the last little cottage and garden behind them, and were in the open road, when a tight little horse and chaise came up and passed them. The occupants waved a hand and a whip in answer to the children's shout.

"Mother saw us," said Philip.

"Faver shook him's whip at me," laughed little Rose.

Here the new road branched off, and far before them they could see the white masses of buildings in the new town.

Still following the old road, they again descended a somewhat abrupt incline, and at a fresh turn, the open space of the wide sea was before them, flashing, dazzling, glorious, in the setting sun. The boy uttered a shout of delight, and the tiny child clapped her hands, and almost sprang from her seat. The tide was coming in; its low steady plash sounded upon the hollow beach below them; here and there a boat, with its white sail, rested like a smile upon the face of the beautiful waters, and the patient sun, hasting to lay him down, seemed yet to linger, and lend a brighter glory, ere quenching his beaming coronet in the cool waves.

But a minute only this scene was before them, as the little cavalcade followed the track of the chaise. The road was narrower; on one side a low fence separated it from an orchard, whose well-laden trees called forth anew the admiration of the children. On the other a rocky wall, clothed in parts with verdure, rose far above their heads.

"Up to 'e sty," said Rose, looking up in awe.

Ah! but I can see how you can get up; I know, Rosey, we'll get up to the top some day; and the sea is the other side, I know," said the boy exultingly.

Then came a straggling row of low irregular dwellings, the most ancient of the village—old "Piert's Rest" par excellence; then one or two of loftier pretensions, and then, standing a little back from hand or foot of irreverent passer-by, yet with its wide porch

and flowery turf, a blessed welcome to weary-foot wanderer, stood the old grey church.

With its well-worn path, its ever-open gate, its air of humble sanctity, of meek holiness—with its moss-grown headstones, its neatly-kept graves, or its weed-grown hillock—the last resting-place of the remembered and beloved, the forlorn, the uncared-for, or vicious. Oh, the keen lessons, the eloquent mute sermons that old grey church bore to all who would read ! The grey moss-covered walls, the four worn steps descending to the body of the church, wore a garb of sanctity unattained by sculptured dome and pillared portico. The white daisy and pale primrose blossomed in the tufted grass, the unseen violet filled the air with its perfume ; only the sound of the shrill grasshopper broke the silence, as the cart moved heavily along.

And now, on either side the road, the trees growing thick and high, the branches met and interlaced overhead, the cart moved softly over the mossy ground ; from the green banks the gay dragon-fly flitted away through the twilight, and the grasshopper plied his merry music invisibly.

Emerging again into the evening sunshine, the little cavalcade slackened pace as they passed an opening affording another view of the sea, now calm as a lake, across which the sun was throwing its farewell beams ; and turning a corner of a jutting rock, clothed with verdure, stopped in front of a small house almost entirely surrounded by short trees of the most luxuriant and thickest foliage.

Even before in sight of the dwelling, the song of a bird had reached them, and now, as they drew up, where the chaise had stopped before them, a night-

ingale, visible in one of the thickest of the bushes, poured forth its sweet tones undismayed; while in the furthest recesses of the mimic wood, the minor choristers of the night brought in their humbler strains to swell the twilight hymn.

They were at Birdiethorn.

"Here we are! this is home, Rosey," said the boy, scrambling down headlong.

"Come on, Rosey, let us see the garden—oh! such a beautiful garden!—come along—" and away ran the children, hand-in-hand, through the house, the door of which stood open, and round to the back.

"Oh, mother! here's such an arbour out here!" cried Philip, returning in a while; "I found it, mother, covered with white flowers like wax, and roses too, mother; and you can hardly get in for the briars and weeds——"

"Cherries, mother, *real* ripe cherries," said Rose.

"And, mother, do you know where this door leads to?—right into such a nice place, all stone, and windows with such tiny panes, and all green over them; and a stream of water along the bottom——"

"That is the dairy, my dear."

"Oh, my Phil!" cried Rose, again running in; "come and see, such a many fowers!" and she pulled her brother to follow her to the garden. But in a few minutes both children again entered breathless, eager to relate the wonders they had discovered.

"Mother, father, there is a little gate at the bottom of the garden, right behind a great tree; but I can't open it."

"And, mother, do come and look at the next room; oh, such a funny cupboard right in the wall!"

"The sea is the other side the rock—I can hear it," said Philip. "I should like to get that door open—have you been up stairs, mother? oh, there is such a nice little room out of the big one, just do for Rosey!"

"Will it, Phil? oh, I will see it;" and away ran Rose.

"Isn't it a dear home, Rosey; better than Brown Street—eh, Rosey?"

"Yes, Phil; oh yes—oh yes!" cried the child,—clapping her hands.

"Philip, my boy, you might help father to bring in some of those things from the cart; the man is anxious to be gone."

"Yes, mother, that I can;" and away sprang the boy.

The cart, disburdened of its load, went lumbering off down the soft mossy road; the boy assisted his father in carrying the lighter articles of furniture, and as the last were deposited within the house, little Rose toddled in, her lap laden with flowers.

"I so tired, my Phil," said she, as she sat down upon the steps at the back door, and rested her head upon the shoulder of her brother, who untied her hat, and relieved her of her sweet burden.

"Won't we have nice games here, Rose, eh?—and I will make you such a garden; and we can sit out in this porch, and I read to mother while you dress your dolls; eh, Rosey?"

They gathered round the table to their first meal in their new home, while the stars came out in the deep sky, and the sea washed in monotonous measure upon the beach, behind the rock that sheltered the little house. Now and then a droning beetle, or bewildered bat, would tap upon the window, or momentarily entangle itself in the thick creeper which half covered it; and

the children would look up at one another, and laugh at the total absence of all other sounds, so unusual to their town-bred ears.

Later in the night, Philip stood with his mother in the outer porch, which a young moon softly lighted with her first timid rays. The boy held her hand, and as he looked up in her face—

“It will be a nice home, won’t it, mother?” said he.

“I hope so, my child,” she said, gently.

“We shall be very happy, eh, mother?”

“I am sure I hope so, dear. Yes, I trust and think we shall.”

Philip looked up still anxiously to her face: she smiled down upon him, and stroked his head; then, as his father came out to the door, she bade him say “Good-night,” and go to bed, for there would be plenty to do to-morrow.

Soon all was still, but the soft splash of the restless sea, and the murmur of night, which is never still. The timid moon grew less faint, as she looked down into the sweet depths of the shadowed earth, and on the quiet waters which courteously mirrored back her pale face and starry throne. In the wild nettle and tangled thorn, in the wax-like jasmine and soft rose’s bosom, droned the night beetle, and the harmless bat winged through the stilly hours on his mysterious errand. The ghosts—if ghosts there were—who haunted Birdiethorn, did their spiriting gently, for untroubled and serene, the summer night passed away, and yielded up its last breath in the pure embrace of the young blushing morn.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

HOME.

"There is a magic in that little word ;
 It is a mystic circle that surrounds
 Comforts and virtues, never known beyond
 The hallowed limit."

SOUTHEY.

WHILE the delighted children continued to improve their acquaintance with the new home—making the acquaintance of every glorious insect, bird, and flower of their little paradise, and deepening in love by acquaintance, not wearying with satiety;—while the father took place among his new companions and fellow-workmen—by his undeniable and superior skill and taste to gain their admiration or their envy—village tongues were not idle: a theme so rich had not been afforded them for many a day.

The strangers, who had come upon them so suddenly had commenced their campaign by taking possession of a dwelling in which, scarcely one of them but would have forfeited her ears rather than stay a single night—and so pleasantly and calmly tenanted it, as though audaciously setting all legendary fears at nought. There was something in this, to begin with, not at all calculated to allay the envious misgivings with which they had heard of the arrival of the new man from London.

"Never heard the like, I didn't," observed the

indignant Mrs. Crump, with a toss of the head—"As though ne'er a soul could do ought but comes fro' London. I'd soon shew him different, and make him glad to go back again."

"It's easy talking, Polly," said her more placid husband.

"I'd let him see I could *do*, as well's talk. London, forsooth! I'll lay he's just as stupid as may be."

"Nay, nay; he's none o' that. This Master Steyne's a fine chap at the work—he is so; and as for them stone carvings, why there's none can come up to him: we couldn't be without him now; but it's the being put above us like, that comes over me. We've been at works as many months as he has weeks, and he's like he might be master a'most."

"Shouldn't be master o' me I reckon," said Mrs. C., with another shake of her head. "I'd bring him down a peg, in his airs and bounce."

"He hasn't no bounce neither, Polly, for the matter o' that; the master comes and stands alongside of him when he's at work, and looks on and talks to him, and asks him this and that: but Steyne makes no more on't than nothing, and is just as ready to do a fellow a good turn, or to wink at a blunder, as e'er a one."

"He's bewitched you all, I think, but he won't me, I know, nor his wife neither, a stalking madam, with her proud brats. Mr. Thom might be ashamed——"

But Crump had escaped the remainder of a storm, which, he knew by experience, would rage with violence so long as he ventured to stand before it.

But a neighbour or two fortunately coming in at the moment, afforded Mrs. Crump an opportunity of

pursuing the theme, and much amiable discussion ensued as to the merits of the new comers; the superiority of their furniture, the taste displayed in such arrangements of the little household as were apparent, and, above all, the astounding fact that Birdiethorn possessed a "pianey."

"A pianey!"—every eye was turned upon the informant—"Yes! or an organ. We were walking up past there Sunday evening; when on a sudden comes music out at the open windows at Steyne's, playing hymns and singing, for all the world like a church."

"Well, well, now! for a working-man to be at his piano and singing—eh, dear!" Mrs. Crump raised her eyes and hands in consternation.

"She seems proud to my thinking," said another gossip.

"Aye, and the children too; they don't mix with the rest and rough it as children should. They were with my boy the other day, and he took a bird's nest; you never heard the to-do as young Philip made about it, he says."

"A bit spoiled I reckon——"

The conclave was suddenly broken by an exclamation of "There she comes"—and the gossips huddled back just within the porch, as their new neighbour passed on her way home, accompanied by her children.

The moment they had passed, every head protruded, every tongue was busy.

"Well, now, she might put her children into something better than those white blouses and belts," said Mrs. Crump, whose mania for finery amounted to a vital principle. "With her pianos and sofys, she might let them be decent."

"That girl is a real beauty," said one.

"Rather pinkey and whitey, isn't she?"

"It's well to be Mrs. Steyne, to walk abroad and take it so easy, I think."

"They go every evening up to the New Town to meet him."

"All among the men?"

"No, not all among the men, neither!"—burst in a boy who had been lying on the grass unheeded—"for they sit down in the churchyard at Piert's Rest, and wait for him."

Mrs. Darby bade him hold his tongue, and on his replying somewhat saucily, dodged after him with views of assault, which she achieved so unexpectedly that the rest laughed.

"Ah! you needn't talk," said the urchin, prepared for retreat; "Phil's mother's a deal better than any of you. You'd better come and get father's tea, and don't hit me again, else I may tell about what I found in the cellar."

He darted off, pursued by his enraged step-mother, leaving her dear friends to deal with her individual case discreetly as they might.

Meanwhile, unconscious of the observation her movements had attracted, Mrs. Steyne pursued her walk, every pleasure enhanced by the delight and enjoyment of her little companions, as they jumped and ran before her.

People are apt to talk of children's faces all bearing a certain resemblance—of their wanting character. Surely this is a mistake. Tiny, as each feature, may be the tint and outline of propensity and passion, but as certainly making part of the miniature man, as

hereafter when fostered or suppressed, stunted or in full bloom, as circumstances shall determine.

In the large dark blue eyes of little Rose, in her happy joyous face, there was little to be read but the unalloyed gladness of very existence; the delight of mere life itself; which is, in fact, the chief charm of childhood to those who have outlived even the memory of such a sensation.

But the glow of enthusiasm, which could light up that baby face, told of a keen appreciation of the beautiful, whether in nature or art; such an intense admiration of loveliness, to the total oblivion of every other quality and charm, that, in one so young, was remarkable. All "beauty birds," flowers, pretty children, had an attraction for little Rose, which to the fancy of those who doated on her seemed, as if, beautiful herself, she claimed kindred with the very spirit of beauty.

This and the most unselfish love for the only friends she had ever known—sole germs of character yet apparent in their unrestrained expression—served but to render more lovely the little face for which kind nature had done her utmost.

The children, reared in that privacy of home which is attainable only in a great city, were shy and retiring, and failing the attempt to become play-fellows with the village children, had returned to their own companionship with apparently renewed satisfaction. At home, as children never fail to be, among fields and trees, they had already made themselves familiar with the neighbourhood, and now darted hither and thither, happier in the knowledge that

their mother was at hand, leisurely pursuing her walk, and enjoying their happiness.

"Mother! mother!" cried a little panting voice, "come and see! My Phil have so hurt his hand; oh! what shall he do, mother?"

Mrs. Steyne, hastening towards them, found Rose lamenting over her brother, whose hand, puffed and inflamed, told a tale in connexion with a huge bed of stinging-nettles half-way up the bank.

"He was getting me flowers, mother," said Rose, just ready to cry, as she chafed the wounded hand, unmindful of the bunch of fragrant blossoms at her feet.

But Philip, whose favourite reading lay among the ancients, had doubtless in his mind the example of a Socrates or a Scævola, as he assured Rose, with a smile, that it "didn't hurt much," and would soon be "all right," then hastened to gather up the flowers he had persevered in obtaining.

But the little girl's interest in them was gone, and she now walked quietly by her mother's side, still insisting on nursing the swollen hand of her favourite.

"Suppose we run a race, then, Rosey," he said, "I'll give you up to the old oak there. Go on, Rose. I'll say when."

Looking back to his mother, he nodded—"I'll let her win, mother; eh?"

His mother smiled at him, and looked fondly after the good-natured lad as he ran, with an elaborate pretence of immense effort, to overtake the little figure in advance; which, with streaming hair, and hat upon her shoulders, was straining every nerve to triumph in the race. Which she did, and in high exultation ran

back to her mother, followed by Philip, who was stopped half-way by a lad rather bigger than himself; with whom he remained in conversation, till his mother came up.

"Who is that, Philip?" asked Mrs. Steyne, as the boy left them.

"It's Will Darby, mother, I like him better than any of them."

"I don't," said Rose, "he hit my Phil."

"Ah, but I hit him first," said Philip; and then, in answer to his mother's questions, he went on to tell how Will had laughed at him for not liking to take birds' nests, and said all the London boys were noodles and cowards; how Philip, to vindicate the honour of his native city, had struck the asperser; how a fight had been the result, and Will had the best of it, and then begged his pardon, and said he was sorry, and how all was made up, and the boys had been the best of friends since, and no more birds' nests were taken.

Then followed the mother's gentle reprimand, and the subject dismissed, she bade them hurry on, lest their father should be waiting.

The children scampered off, and, loading themselves with flowers as they went, soon reached the turn in the road, where they usually awaited their father. Learning from those of the workmen they met, that he had not yet left the buildings, they ran on up the new road which led to them, leaving their mother seated upon the mossy roots of one of the ancient elms which shadowed the old churchyard.

Breathing the pure country air, soothed by the sounds of peace and loveliness, those many nothings which make up Nature's sweet voice, to which she had

so long been a stranger, the good mother, resting her head upon her hand, her gentle face turned upward, sat musing for awhile upon a past, where Memory, to be faithful, could not be kind; then, seeming to dismiss those pictures with a sigh of relief, she smiled, as the future, led in by Hope, appeared, and Fancy's brightest forms came trooping gaily before her. For the material is but subject to the immaterial world of thought and mood; and the dusky sad old churchyard became a paradise of delight and joy, under the sunshine of her pleasant visions; which the voice of her little daughter did not disperse, but rather confirmed, calling to her from the gate, where she sat perched on her father's shoulder, laughing like a fairy, while Phil followed, loaded with his father's tools and his sister's hat.

A good-humoured looking man, in workman's dress, walked by the side of her husband, to whom he introduced her by saying—

“I've brought Mr. Crump home to have a cup of tea with us, Harriette. You see she's such a wife, David, as won't take offence, do what I will; she's never put out.”

Poor David muttered an indistinct compliment, as Mrs. Steyne shook hands with him. Had it been interpreted from within, it is likely the sense thereof would not have been particularly pleasing to Mrs. Crump. The good wife hurried on to make her preparations, which were all complete when the little party entered the house. And a more tempting spread, or one more calculated at once to gratify eye and palate, never was beheld since sweet mother Eve minis-

tered to her lord in Paradise, and the first guest on record.

In the parlour of the little cottage, whose window was half covered by the honey-dropping cobeia, the Virginian vine, and the China rose, making the flowing net curtains almost a superfluity, the tea was laid.

That window looked upon the garden, with its clustering flowers, not set in formal beds, but here and there, as if their own fancy had sown or planted—the roses, the lilies, the bright stock, and richly scented pinks, fair daffodils, and haughty petted tulip; with its humble plots of herbs, whose fragrance went so largely to make up the rich incense that floated on the evening air, all unacknowledged by the gratified sense, even as the labour of the humbler brethren and sisterhood ministers to the luxury of the more fortunate, unnumbered in the list of bounties.

The little arbour now almost hidden in the climbing plants which covered it; the cherry and the plum trees, still rich in treasure; the mass of thorn and willow, and mountain ash behind; and lastly, the grass-covered rock which formed the background to the whole,—it was like a pleasant picture set in a frame of flowers. The day had been hot; but the little room was cool and shady. The furniture, if somewhat above what the village housekeepers could boast, was neither showy nor expensive. Some few articles of ornament and taste there were, two or three sketches in water-colour neatly framed, a shelf of books, more valuable for the contents than the outside; and, on the mantel-shelf, a handsome timepiece, and two small but beautiful figures, carved in stone, Steyne's own

work. Near the window was a small couch, on which was thrown a cover of the same texture as the curtains. It was not much, certainly nothing to justify David Crump's look of awe, as he came in with the tread of one entering a sanctuary, and paused again inside the door, and waited to let Steyne pass him.

Why, books are cheap enough, and the furniture is but plain mahogany and green baize, man; and the carpet is drugget, and these are but evergreens and seaweed in the grate; and those cloud-like curtains, and the sofa cover—oh! if you did but know the paltry sum they cost in Tottenham Court Road! and that glass vase, too, with the flowers—a few flowers are soon gathered. O David, take heart, man! No, do not look at the woman who is taking her place so quietly at the table. The charm is not there; for, see you that print gown, good Mrs. Crump would not wear it to wash her dishes in; and she spent more than the worth of four such dresses upon those last beads and bracelets of hers, or in your smart new waistcoat-piece, red and gold, which she chose. It is not in the face, either, gentle and smiling as it is. There are shadows round those large dark eyes, and an earnest wistful look, which will but trouble you, who have conned your lessons in the broad blood-full face of your louder half. Take courage, then, David. All that money can buy you have in your home; that which you feel here, is what money never yet bought.

If one, looking out from the window of the shady room into the sweet and pleasant garden, had chosen a fitting group to complete his picture withal, he could not have lighted on one more apt than that which is now before us.

Steyne, had thrown aside his white cap, and seated himself on the couch, inviting his friend to do the same, in a way which showed it to be no holiday usage, but for the welcome rest of each day's close. His broad forehead, his thick curling hair, and smiling blue eyes, would have spoken anywhere to his relationship with the child now prattling upon his knee. But the golden hue of the little head was wanting in the man's hair, which was heavier, duskier; and the smile on the full lips, which might have been, a long time ago, sweet and trusting as that on the baby mouth, dwindled, even while you gazed, into an expression, half of weakness, half of falsity. Yet he was handsome, sterlingly so; and the white blouse—common to his craft—which he wore, set off his well-made muscular form to the best advantage.

His wife sat opposite, in that simple dress of striped chocolate and white, a small linen collar and cuffs, a narrow band of black velvet round her throat, and a ring with one stone above the wedding ring her only ornament—her dark hair turned back from her forehead, with a head-dress of black lace—like her gown, the work of her own hands.

She had never been a beauty, not even pretty: the deep thoughtful eyes, and the pale face, and the earnest look—all which her boy inherited—came into no style or order of beauty. Perhaps her face had not been always pale, nor the shadows around her eyes so deep; and there were lines in the face now which had been wanting ten years ago: still those who loved Harriette Steyne, must love her for other cause than beauty.

But as she sat now smiling and happy, and, in her

simple attire, truly gracing the humble table, she formed a pleasant object in the picture—the more, perhaps, as a contrast to her light-hearted, handsome, careless husband opposite.

For David Crump, with his broad, good-tempered blank-page face—how well he filled up the space between, and looked the astonishment and admiration it would have puzzled him to put into words, and listened to the merry prattle of little Rose, who, now her shyness had worn off, did not fail to inform him that—“Mover made this bread, and the butter too; and I helped mover pick these strawberries and ’ere was penty mere tream in the dairy room!” While all the exploits of ‘my Phil,’ were dilated upon, with a zest and amplification which amused and surprised no one more than the reputed hero himself.

The happy meal over, Steyne sat down before an unpretending little piece of furniture which almost escaped observation in the corner where it stood, and opening it, commenced playing, with much skill and more taste, some fine old church music. After a few bars he struck up with the words; his wife joined in, and, in softer tones, the children united their treble voices.

The sweet music swelled upon the evening air, drifted out upon the wide sea—who knows how far—by what echoes repeated? Perhaps where listening mariners breathless catch the strains, and straightway sullen seals shall become warbling syrens; and adown the village, where amiable dames, unconvertible, by any stretch of fancy, into syrens, will sneer:—

“Jim, there’s they Steynes at their pianey, indeed!”

Even the soul of poor David swelled, with a feeling which was new, or at least very strange, to it. Maybe he had felt something akin to it when he believed his Polly to be an angel sent down upon earth for his especial beatification ; but, eh ! that was a long time ago.

It was with this feeling that he expressed his surprise and his pleasure right heartily, as his friend rose from the instrument.

" Oh ! that's nothing ; you must hear my wife play." And she, sitting down in her turn, lent her own very sweet voice to complete the melody. She played with evidence of greater practice than her husband.

" There ! that's something like now, isn't it ? Why, she taught me."

" He made it himself, sir," said Mrs. Steyne, as Crump approached to look more closely at the instrument.

" Made it ?—you did ?"

" Oh, ah ! I made it in my leisure, when we were first married."

" Why, it's quite out of your line."

" Oh, anything's in my line that I give my mind to : at least it was then ; I don't know that I could do it now.

" I am sure you could, George, just as well as ever," said his wife.

" Well, perhaps I could," said he, laughing, and evidently gratified at the words of praise, familiar as they were from her lips too.

" But see you, old fellow ; here's what I can't do, nor you neither, I'm thinking." And he led Crump round to look at the drawings upon the wall, among

which were the portraits of his children. "These are hers : she did all these ; and then she talks about me."

He looked round, but his wife had left the room.

"She hasn't always lived in a village, has she ?"

"Ah ! Crump, she's a wife of a thousand, she is. Suppose we go and finish our strawberries in the garden. Here, you young crickets, come and carry out the cream ; and, Rosey, bring mother's work-basket. I know she'll not sit without something to be busy at. And I've got a London paper somewhere. I'll read to you. By the by, too, Crump, I promised to make that job of the cornice work clear to you, so I did, and we sha'n't have a better time."

The sun was setting, and as they seated themselves in the little harbour, the unwearied inhabitants of the myriad homes around them were pouring out their little souls of song, till the rocks behind re-echoed, and it seemed as if voices from afar came upon the air, joining in the universal hymn.

Gradually these too were silenced, yielding the palm to the bird of night, who alone remained, discoursing of the bounties of earth and heaven, rounding each softer cadence to more perfect praise.

"Eh, but you have a sweet place here, Mr. Steyne ! you have so ; and yon beautiful creature's just the queen of it," said Crump.

Rose was perching behind her father, resting her head upon his shoulder, twining her fingers in his hair, relating wonderful secrets in whispers, and now and again receiving from him the biggest strawberries as they came to view.

"She's a happy little mortal. Aren't you, Rosey ?"

"There I've read all there is to read," said Steyne.

as he folded up the paper; "and she can't bear to hear anything about London. Can you Harriette?"

"Never mind me, dear," said his wife.

"Well, I never care to see it again; I'm well enough here, for the matter of that, and they were never well there."

"We couldn't do without you now, Steyne;" said the free-hearted Crump; "and I will say, though you did put my nose out, I'm not sorry you've come."

Harriette looked up so gratefully at the honest fellow as he spoke; and Steyne's pleased look of gratified vanity increased as David continued—

"You must have served under a first-rate master, you must so, Mr. Steyne: you're but young, so to speak, now; and them things as you turned out for them pillars is grand, and no mistake."

"Why, you see," Steyne began—when a loud burst of laughter, and the entrance of his little son into the arbour interrupted him.

"Mother! father! do but look at Rose! she has dressed up, and there she is looking at herself, and calling it—'beauty thing.' Do look! oh, she does look so pretty!"

The glass door of the dairy was turned back; and there, as in a looking-glass, the child stood admiring with the most perfect simplicity what indeed was truly worthy of admiration. She had slipped off the holland blouse, and appeared in the little frock of light blue muslin which she wore underneath. Her head was wreathed in flowers, ingeniously twisted and fastened upon a spray of clematis, of which the straggling blossoms hung down upon her dimpled shoulders, mingling with her fair curling hair. Her waist was

circled by a similar wreath, and on her feet she wore the "Sunday shoes" of blue kid, which the urchin had substituted for her ordinary leather boots.

So she stood, gazing in profound unconsciousness, till a hearty laugh from her father aroused her, when she turned, and, running to him, jumped into his opened arms.

"In't it pretty?"—she asked, gazing into his face, with such utter absence of restraint, such thorough childish *naïveté*, that it provoked another laugh, from all but her mother, who said rather gravely,—

"The flowers are, Rose."

"It's all pretty, darling; of course it is, my precious!" said her father, kissing her; while honest David patted her little hands, that clasped her father's neck, and muttered something about "angel," and "beautiful."

"Why, you haven't shown this gentleman your dance, Rosey. You must let him see you dance. I'm sure he never saw such a little dancer in his life." And her father set her down, and, moving the table in the arbour, made a space in front, for his child to exhibit; saying, in answer to the mother's faint remonstrance, "Let her be, Harriette; let her be. The child's right enough; she's no more pride of herself than the flowers that grow have."

He then whistled the tune of a dance not long introduced in London, and the child began. How she had learned it, unless by watching strolling performers from the window, none of them could guess; but she danced with a lightness, with a native taste and aptness, which was wonderful. The little attitudes and interpolations of her own, were constantly varied.

and her little feet, apparently untiring, increased in speed and dexterity. Philip looked on, his pale affectionate face radiant with admiration; and Crump positively grew poetical.

Her father ceased whistling, and the baby performer as suddenly ceased, and, running up, hid her face in his; but, the minute after, she received the caresses of Mr. Crump, who, lifting her on his knee, loaded her with praises; and the friendship was complete.

"I can sing a song too, I can," said the young aspirant after fame, lifting her innocent face to the broad one of the honest carpenter.

"Eh! so you can, Rosey, sing away my fairy," said her father: and the little creature sang sweetly, and with few errors, that never-to-be-forgotten melody, "Home sweet Home."

The nightingale even had taken farewell of evening; the stillness was so perfect that the whispering of the never-silent sea beyond was distinctly heard; and with the last words the little singer uttered, almost in a breath, "I so seepy," she said, and looked round for her mother, who had risen to take her. The last "good-nights" were being uttered, when a shadow fell across the harbour, and, as they looked, a man on horseback rode slowly by, at the side of the garden.

He had passed some little distance, when he turned back, and approaching the garden fence, said, slightly lifting his hat, "I believe Mr. Steyne lives here."

Steyne replied it was he. "My name is Crichton," said the other. That Steyne knew, and he said as much.

"I shall be glad to have some talk with you, when you have time to spare," said Crichton. "I want to consult you about some alterations."

A time was named, and the rider passed on.

"That will be about the new public-house he's going to build, or alter, I suppose—old 'Piert's Rest' yonder," said Crump. "He owns two o' the biggest in the place you know a'ready, and he's about buying the old house; but dame Mabberley's a rum one to deal with; she don't stand out about money neither, but about the name of the place. She won't part with it, unless he'll give it her down in black and white, as that he'll alter the name. She's been there, and her husband afore her, well-near upon fifty years; and she says it's safe to be a different place to what it was in their time, and she don't want to see th' old name took to. So he'll have to give in, I reckon."

"He's pretty free with his money: he laid down more to the new church than e'er a one, except the bishop."

"Ah! he's a queer chap. He was worth his thousands, they say, and ran through it all in horse-racing and horse-dealing, and, when he started again, hadn't a penny to bless himself: but he's got on. His wife had money, they say. Eh! she is a nice creature too. But he don't stick at nothing to make money. He serves in his own bar as often as not.

"What does he want with me, think you?"

"Oh! he'll have heard tell of you, of course, and he wants to get you to plan this new house of his. And a first-rate thing for you too, Steyne, if you do. He and Moffat, the man as laid out his two other places, could not hit it at all, somehow; but between you and me, I think Moffat got too fond of his drink."

"Shall we walk round the garden? She will be down directly, and we'll have a bit of supper."

"Aye, with all my heart!"

The little heads were by this time resting upon their pillows. The prized wreaths lay withering upon the quilt, where the fairy hand had kept its hold upon them to the last.

The mother's heart, which never failed to be troubled at these little displays, fearful of their effect upon the future of her child, calmed, almost to smiling at her own uneasiness, looking at the sweet trait in the baby-mind, this dawning taste of the pure and beautiful, and the simplicity which made the flowers and the wearer one, and would as readily, she knew, have adorned the most lively playmate, and claimed admiration for her.

"Mother, you seem vexed, when I tell Rosey she's pretty," said Philip." Why it's the truth, mother; and we must tell the truth."

"If your sister were ugly, or crippled, like poor Ritter, you would not tell her of it; would you?"

"No, mother; because it would hurt her."

How could the mother hope, or care, to make the boy comprehend that it was more likely to be hurtful to hear constantly the more pleasant truth?

"Besides, she asks me, mother: she says, 'Ain't she pretty, Phil?' when she looks in the water ponds, and laughs at herself, and nods as if it was another little girl; and I can't tell her a story, mother, can I?"

"No, my dear."

"You haven't kissed me, my Phil," called the sleepy voice from the little cot in the closet, and, half disrobed, the boy hastened to fulfil this pleasant duty.

"Tell me a story, when mover's gone down," whispered little Rose, with her arms about his neck.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

£. S. D.

"Thou senseless stock ! because thou 'rt richly gilt,
 The blinded people without cause admire,
 And superstition impiously hath built
 Altars to that which should have been the fire."

SIR R. FANSHAWE.

"I CANNOT see it in that light, I must say."

"Well, sir, you see, Mr. Thom—it was through his brother I came down at all. He'd seen me work in London, and when he was going to build down here he sent for me, when I was badly enough put to it, and introduced me to Mr. Vickers and the other gentlemen; and it does not seem quite the thing to me to quit their work just in the thick of it."

"I suppose they found it to their own interest, Mr. Steyne, to employ you?"

"Well, sir," said George, his gratified vanity smiling, "it's likely they did."

"Of course they did, Mr. Steyne. I tell you candidly I never saw such finish, and such purity and taste of design, combined in the work of any one man; the only pity is that you should not take rank in the higher branches of art. You are in fact more statuary and architect than mason."

Steyne flushed scarlet, with some other emotion than gratified vanity.

"Now if your services are worth so much to them

why, of course they can afford to pay you well. I would not have you lose by me at any rate, and I think I'm not far out when I guess that what I have offered you is half as much again as you're to have of them, even at the new work.

"Well, sir, not far short; but there is to be a rise when we begin the church."

"I don't say but I'll rise too, if satisfied; which I know I shall be. But I beg your pardon, Mr. Steyne, upon my word; what will you take?"

"Nothing, sir, thank you."

"How am I to interpret that, now? Wine, brandy, rum, whisky, or—no, not gin; you are not for gin, I know."

Steyne laughed, and, in the face of another rather fainter refusal, a bottle of wine and glasses were on the table.

"Better never was uncorked, I know, even in the days of old Piert himself, that the folks here swear by pretty nearly," said the publican, as he filled to himself and guest.

"It's all very well talking of honour, and what is right and due to friends, and so forth," he went on; "but as I say to Mrs. Crichton, what does it all come to? what does anyone think the better of you, or care for you, if you want the one thing needful?"

"Look here now!" and he took out a handful of the circulating omnipotence, in the three metals. "If we speak the honest truth, Mr. Steyne, don't we know in our hearts that there's no friend like that? Talk of your genius! where's the genius that can get along without it? Talk of your talent! why what talent comes up to the talent of getting and keeping fast

this precious commodity? 'Talk of your aristocracy—the aristocracy that you Londoners are so proud of!—my word, the true aristocracy is here, sir, here!' and he slapped his pocket.

"There's a good deal in it, sir," said his guest—meaning the argument, not the pocket.

"There is all in it, sir, depend upon it—all! take my word for it. I do not speak without knowledge; I have proved it both ways, and be sure I have not forgotten. My father was a Bolton man—came into Manchester without a shoe to his foot; though he wasn't without the price of a pair either, and, as I have heard him say, he did not go long barefoot. But, shoe or no shoe, whatever he put his foot on seemed to be luck to him. He built up a fortune of something about a hundred thousand, and his son unbuilt it, in about the quarter of the time it had been built."

"Some men are born lucky, sir," remarked Steyne.

"Oh! it was not that either: I am lucky enough; but you see I wanted to make more of it without the drudgery he had gone through. The warehouse did not take my fancy: I must speculate, and grandly I succeeded at first; but the turn came, I trusted too much to my good fortune, and lost it every penny—ev-er-y penny, sir."

The glasses were refilled for the third time.

"I have not forgotten, and I do not think I soon shall, the difference of those two years that I was doing my best to find my feet again. Crichton with his hundreds to back him, and Crichton wanting a twelve-month's credit—well, they were two different men, that is all. I had a pretty fair notion of the value of money before; but, egad, sir! my ideas upon the sub-

ject were sharpened rather from that day. I often say it was worth going through it, to gain the knowledge I did of the importance of £ s. d."

The contents of the speaker's well-filled pockets had chinked an accompaniment through the course of his speech.

"I have made up my mind to one thing," continued Mr. Crichton, the glasses being again filled—"that come what will, in this world, I'll never want money again; *never!* Many a man would have given up under the mortification I suffered—aye, and from many I had believed to be my best friends—Pah! *friends!*—but I made up my mind the more, to let them see I could do without them: so I turned over in my mind for the readiest and surest way of making a fortune; and I rather think, sir—I rather think, Mr. Steyne—I have hit upon it.

"While there is money in the world, a pretty good share of it *will* come to my shop. Births or deaths, weddings or funerals, rejoicing or grieving, up or down,—come they must, high and low. Eh, Mr. Steyne, it's a fine trade!"

"For the money, sir."

"Aye, I mean that. Then it is not everyone that understands the science of the trade. Now this very house—why, sir, what was it when I came? You were not here—true; it was nothing but a paltry beer-shop, a miserable hole of a place. Spirit licence!—eh! bless you, they told me there was no use in a spirit licence! Well, you see now what it is: and a better trade, sir, than to many a house in a superior situation. People don't find out what they want till it's put before them, and then they begin to think about it.

He'd be a child in business that waited till he was asked twenty times for a thing. Set it before them—call attention to it—the demand will come, sir, *fast* enough.

“Then the style, sir—the style. People like to have something for their money, even if it's nothing they can carry away with them. A man thinks five times as much of his liquor if he takes it with all the gilding, and marble work, and what not about him, with the best of them. He feels a pride in it, as if it were some way his own.”

“Indeed, sir, it is so!” replied Steyne before whom his fourth glass now stood.

“I believe it is too! Then there's my other house, up in the town—the ‘Bluebottle.’ Knacker is in that; but I am up there twice a day, and all day on Saturdays; for the most of the men are paid there. There was a fairish trade to that, when I took it—slow and sure—but nothing to what it is now. The trade there was chiefly barrel work—ale and beer. Now I will be bound we do a three days' trade of last year in one.

“The London gin and porter was one good stroke I did for that house. You know there are plenty pretend to have the real thing; but mine is no make-believe, as they well know who have tasted it.

“But I mean to close that, up yonder, in the autumn.”

“Close it! Mr. Crichton?”

“Aye, shut it up fast, or, better still, alter it right away to something else. Don't you see the new place—‘Piert's Rest’ that was? It will take all the steady trade of that, and snap up all going to and from the town; besides that, the town is coming down to it Mr. Steyne.”

"You've a long head, sir."

"Well, well, I do not say as much to everyone, Mr. Steyne; but I flatter myself I am talking to a man who understands me; and you and I must understand each other."

"Certainly, sir," said George with a pleased air.

"Yes, I intend that my new place shall be a pattern. It shall be the glory of the town: there shall not be such a house in the trade for a hundred miles round.

"You heard of the old lady standing out over the name of the place? Of course it never entered into my head to retain the name. 'The Crichton' I always intended that should be, from the first moment I rode up the hill and saw it; but it was not for me to tell her that, and she'd rather dock off a clear fifty than give up her whim."

"It is yours then, sir!" said Steyne.

"Oh, yes; it is mine right enough! and as fast as hands can work, Mr. Steyne, I want that ancient old ruin level to the earth; and a right down, first-rate building on the spot. That is to be my head-quarters—if indeed I keep this on at all. I am doubtful about that. What do you say, Mr. S.? It would not be a bad investment for you, in a year or two."

Steyne shook his head.

"There would be two words to that, sir," said he.

"Oh, your wife perhaps not agreeable! Well, that is like Mrs. Crichton; she has her own notions, but they do not trouble me. 'Money must be made,' I say; and *shall* be made too!"

With that he sounded the symphony of his discourse once more; and rose.

"Well! how is it to be then, Mr. Steyne?"

"I really cannot decide just now, sir; will you let me call in again, and give you my answer?"

"I had rather you gave it me now, and I do not see why you should not. However, you are a sensible man, and will not quarrel with your own interests, I am sure; so we will say to-morrow evening, then, at the same time."

"That will do, sir: I will not fail."

As Steyne walked rather hurriedly away, in the direction of his home, Mr. Crichton turned back into his private room, where they had been sitting; and in his contemplative attitude, his hands plunged into those dwelling-places of his dear idol—contact with the constant subject of his thoughts, it is to be presumed, favouring his plans—he paced up and down, his countenance gradually settling into its usual stolid and impassive expression.

Mr. Crichton spoke truly: he did not say as much to everyone as he had that evening to the clever mason.

It was not once in a twelvemonth that he let fall as many words in the same space of time.

He was not a man of speech. I never yet knew a thorough money-grasping man, a confirmed worshipper of £ s. d., who was. But his new plan had taken such possession of his—I was actually going to say, heart—thoughts, and his companion of the time entered so largely into it, that he had unbent to him, more than he perhaps intended; for proud as he was of his talent and success, he very seldom indulged in a boast—in fact, he had no time for it; he did not care enough for anyone's opinions to court it. He wanted to gain this skilful workman: he wanted to interest

him in his plans, and in himself; and he took the course that he knew would be most interesting and successful with himself.

In his compliments to Steyne's skill he was quite sincere. How could he be otherwise? It would not enter into his head to flatter anyone upon the possession of any genius, save that which he valued as highly. He would regard them somewhat as a bank-note-sandwich-chumping-navvy might look upon the frail slight figure of a world-honoured poet—"He *mout* make books, but how long would he ha' stood it, waist-high in water, like me and my mate in our claims out there, under an Australian sun?" Navvy would look with some respect on the man that wore nuggets in his ears and nose, or chumped more notes, or swallowed more champagne than himself; but for rhymes—"be blowed!"

Don't suppose, though, pray, my reader, that I mean for one moment to institute any sort of comparison between our friend Crichton, and friend Navvy. Not for a moment.

Mr. Richard Crichton was a man very much respected—*sequitur*, respectable. He never swore; an oath would have shocked his ears grievously—out of the bar. He never flew into a passion; never called bad names, even when most provoked; and I do not suppose he had ever got drunk in his life. His father had done this much for him—he had received a better education than the greater part of the sons of self-made men ever have bestowed upon them—"What did for me will do for him; I made my first thousand pound before I could write my name," being such a capital text on which to preach a sermon against all clerkly acquirements.

If he was not sharp, he was not stupid: he did as well as most—better than a good many. He never forgot his grammar, or confounded tenses and participles, or boggled at possessives and plurals, or renounced and patronized h's *ad libitum*, or talked unmitigated slang, in spite of the popular authorities which would inculcate the belief that good Christians alone are grammarians, and that "illiterate" and "villainous" are synonymes.

In propounding his very coolest maxims, Mr. Crichton was always pleasant-spoken, correct, and, if not gentlemanly, not very far wrong.

He was too reserved and taciturn to be very agreeable society; though in a drawing-room he was quite at home, and, what is not so usual as might be, without an effort. He could pick up a handkerchief, turn over the music, hand a cup, or a bouquet, with perfect ease—preferable sometimes to grace; and that unstudied manner of his body, in escorting a lady down stairs, could only be equalled by the facility with which his mind could absent itself at the interesting moment. For, be it observed, Mr. Crichton had many excellent qualities, and one of these was his stoical indifference to feminine charms. The sweetest face in the world would not have diverted him from driving a good bargain—no, not for five seconds. Calypso and all her train could not have turned him aside from his way. One good fat seal or portly whale, available for "blubber," would have more chance of arresting the progress of his bark, than all the cries of syren beauty in distress:—witness his obduracy towards poor Cary Hinton.

Had the imprudent maiden, of whom the warbler

Moore hath sung, come wandering to his isle, she would have escaped scot free, minus the jewels she wore.

Oh ! Mr. Crichton had sown no wild oats, of which the harvest might in untimely season have troubled him to garner quietly. Be sure of that.

Lent money ! Of course he had lent money, and at seventy per cent too. But what of that ? Was he to blame for other people's necessities, which made them ready to buy money at any rate ? They came to him with their eyes open, and with all their wits about them. And a mortgage is a mortgage, isn't it ? and time is time ; and a certain hour is a certain hour, isn't it ? Else where the use of naming it ? And is the man to blame for acting up to the letter of an agreement sealed, signed, &c., according to law ?

Not, mind you, that Mr. Crichton would have deemed it necessary for a moment to enter even on such an explanation of his actions. With him all was so earnest, so *bonâ fide*. He meant what he said, and said what he meant. He was no schemer, no plotter ; he could not have conducted a plot or laid an elaborate scheme for his life. His mind, all his energies, were directed to one point ; everything else in all creation was subservient to it ; but he was not ashamed of it—not he. He was quite right with himself in his own estimation—nothing to be ashamed of.

The Judas slank away, and would fain have disowned his unholy barter. Even he would scarce have crucified with his own hands the One whom he betrayed.

Intelligent and enlightened reader—publican even you may be—you will not misunderstand me to say all

of your trade be of the tribe Judas. For there be all men of all trades, who have not even taken thought upon the bearings of it; and as for my pictured characters, why they are to each and all of you but what you take them for. With mine and every writer's, all the same.

Why, he had good cause to think well of that said friend chinking the pleasant symphony. Had it not purchased for him the prettiest, gentlest, quietest, weakest girl that ever bore sons to mortal man? Hadn't it outbid Truth and Honesty, and Manliness and Affection, all to nothing? Hadn't the chinking pleasant symphony gained it over prayers, and protestations, and tears—aye, man's tears—tears of one of the truest, most earnest creatures that ever God created in His own image, whose only fault was believing in her?

No, not his only one—I forgot—he was poor.

Poor, and yet honest enough to refuse to ask for the one he loved, because with her came fortune—honest enough to believe in her honesty, and that when she said she would wait till he had earned what should give him a right to ask her of her mother, she would.

So she would, maybe; but the moneyed man came; and coolly as he had written his farewell to his first portionless love when *his* father showed him his folly, so coolly he stepped in and took of the smiling mother the weeping daughter—bought the body whose heart was another's, and rejoiced in his happy wooing.

A regular church-goer, too, was Richard Crichton. The Crichton pew was as regularly filled as the pulpit, and the Crichton liberality was an example more praised than emulated.

The air with which that five shillings, or sovereign, was dropped into the plate seemed to say—"I have paid for my share, there is the money, not dear either at that." It has often puzzled me, this anomaly with the class Crichton. What do they give that money for? They that will have their money's worth for their money. Five shillings' worth of what? A sovereign for which—what do they compound for?

Had a starving sinner asked for a fifth part of that and similar offerings in Christ's name, our friend would have turned his back, and to the sweet symphony have flatly refused him. It was not ostentation either, for in building the new church the Crichton offering went down as "Anon"—it leaked out somehow, but not through the donor's agency. Besides he cared so little for men's opinions.

After all, are we not all anomalies? Each one hugging his own idea and measure of an Universal Presence, which of us nearest the Truth!

Mr. Crichton prospered, and was a happy man in his own way. His wife cried a good deal, perhaps seven months out of the first twelve of her wedded life; and there was a slight illness consequent upon the receipt of a letter; dictated by a hot head and an aggrieved heart; which she received and read, and gave to her husband, who sent it back with a few very calm words of rational explanation. He was more put out by the loss of his new-born son, who liked so little the aspect of things in this world, that he took his leave of it, almost with the first breath he drew, as quietly as he had entered it.

Even this little grievance did not long affect him. His young wife dried her tears, and resumed her

household duties, obedient to the pointing of his finger. Only upon one subject did she dare to oppose him : she would not consent to serve at the bar, as he, in his anxiety to make money and save money at any cost, had determined on her doing. She must have given way finally even to this, but her resolve to "write to mamma" gained the day. From mamma he had expectations of a substantial nature, and he doubted her favouring his views on that head, money-lover as she herself was.

So we leave him maturing his building plan, and follow the man who was to take so large a share in it ; though he was at that minute very firmly determining to do nothing of the kind.

"I know as well as possible what she will say—of course I do. What is the use of my telling her?" thought Steyne, as he walked slower and slower, the nearer he approached his home.

He had put off his answer with the view of consulting with his wife ; yet he knew what she would say : he knew all the arguments she would advance, as well as if he had heard her but that minute.

He felt she was right ; and he was angry with her for being right : he knew there was but one argument he could advance, and that would not weigh with her ; for they had already enough for comfort, and why seek to gain more, by what his own conscience told him was not an honourable course ?

"I won't mention it to her at all, that I will not," was his final decision. And with that he quickened his steps.

As he turned from the village street into the lane, which led by a short cut to Piert's Rest, he almost

ran against Tom Hinton, who, with a surly grunt in answer to Steyne's friendly "Good day," strode on in the direction of the "Good Ship"—Crichton's house.

It was full three-quarters of an hour after George's usual hour of return, and his wife made some remark, to which he replied with a brief excuse, as they sat down to their tea. It was seldom that the children failed to meet their father; and he had just made some remark upon their absence, when little Rose came running in.

"Oh, mother!" she cried, panting, while her hat hanging down her shoulders, and her tossed hair, showed the speed at which she had run: "mother, my poor Mitis Hinton am crying so, her am!"

Her father opened his arms as usual for his darling, and she ran into them; but she did not show her delight in the way most frequent with her: her little head was full of something she had just seen, which she was describing in her baby fashion, when Philip, who was never far behind, came slowly in.

"Why, Phil, my boy, what is the matter?" said his father. "You look quite disconsolate."

Philip's usually ready smile did not answer, and his lips quite trembled as he said, "Something bad's the matter with Mrs. Hinton, at the little white cottage, father; she has been crying so."

"Perhaps she is ill, my dear," said the mother: "where did you see her?"

"We had gathered Rosey's lap full of chickweed for the bird—she seemed so pleased with what we took the other day, mother, and she always speaks so kind—and we took it, and the door was open, and I tapped, but she didn't answer; so I thought she was in the

garden, perhaps, at back; and we went in; for she told us always to go through, when the door was open. And when we got in, there she was sitting in the parlour, leaning her head on her hands, and her eyes were all swelled; and when Rosey ran up with the chickweed, she lifted her into her lap, and began to talk to her; and Rosey put up her mouth to kiss her; and Mrs. Hinton leaned her head on Rosey, and burst out crying. Oh! she did cry so!"

"Yes—and the table is broten."

"The table broke!"

"Yes, mother," said Philip gravely; "the table and a chair is broke; and one of those pretty glass things on the mantel-shelf, that was full of flowers, is smashed in the grate."

The boy cast his eyes down, as he spoke, and his colour rose, as if he had been in fault.—The blush was reflected too, somehow, in his father's face, who was busy with his little daughter, and made no remark.

"Come to your tea now, there is a good boy," said his mother—the words hastily covering a sigh.

It was a dull evening with them all at Birdiethorn. Father did not care to play the music. Mother was dull; and when Philip got a book to read to her, it did not mend matters: he had to ask her the meaning of a word many times before he got an answer.

Then the little chap, with the tact that was habitual to him, child as he was, perceiving she was deeply thinking, laid away the book; and he and Rose set to gathering flowers, till they had filled their mother's lap, and occupied themselves in making them up into bunches.

"Shall we take one to Mrs. Hinton, Rosey?" he half whispered.

"No, dears, no: you must not go to trouble Mrs. Hinton. I shall see her to-night; I will give her the flowers."

"Will you say we sent them, mother?"

"Yes."

"I uve Mrs. Hinton—she am so pretty."

"Oh! Rosey! Rosey, my child!—do you love none but those who are pretty? You love me and your brother; and we are not pretty."

"Es, my Phil *am* pretty! I sure he am. You am pretty, my Phil, aint you?" And down went the flowers, while the earnest child, holding her brother's face with both hands, looked into it with the air of a connoisseur.

She repeated her question: the good-natured boy laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Oh! you funny girl, Rosey! No, I ain't pretty, no more than that old stump with the thorns round it: You're pretty;" and he kissed her.

"Well, I uve you—I do, my Phil," said Rose, hugging him round the neck, with all her baby strength, and kissing him.

They were in the garden: George with his paper, just outside the little arbour where his wife sat, at work. And as the sun went down, came on the old evening choir, led by dame nightingale; and for the bass, the everlasting sea, with its never-ending moan to the flinty rock, casting back the impetuous worshipper again, again, and unceasingly.

Little Rose had run away to gather a sprig of the blue forget-me-not, which her mother was so fond of, and which grew in clusters only in one spot—singularly enough at the foot of the huge thorn which filled up the farthest end of the garden.

Singing a half-song to herself, the pretty creature hopped and jumped away—when she suddenly uttered a loud shriek, and came running back, but fell before she could reach the arbour.

Her brother was at her side in a moment, and had her in his arms; she was trembling all over, but it was some moments before she could cry or speak. Meanwhile, Mrs. Steyne had touched her husband on the shoulder—"George, who is that man? do you know him?—there, going down by the field towards the church."

Steyne rose, and looked over the fence. "Yes, it's Hinton, Tom Hinton, the husband of that pretty girl you know."

"Is that Hinton? Have you offended him?"

"Offended him! no, not I! Why—what's the matter with Rose; something stung her?"

"No; that man scared her. He was looking over the pales, there, between the thorns at the bottom of the garden; and the child caught sight of him. I started up as she cried out, and saw him pass round at the side; and when he saw you, he shook his fist at you, and looked, oh! so savagely! I do hope he has not any spite against you."

"My dear, I never spoke above twenty words to the man since we've been here, except in the work. What could he want round at the back here, I wonder?"

Little Rose had by this time pretty well recovered herself;—she sobbed a little while, and told how the man "frightened me tho!"—and then fell asleep in her father's arms, whence he transferred her to her bed, and then returned to his paper.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

FROM THE HEARTH.

"I fain would die !—

To go through life unloving and unloved ;
 To feel that thirst and hunger of the soul
 We cannot still ; that longing, that wild impulse,
 And struggle after something we have not,
 And cannot have ; the effort to be strong,
 And, like the Spartan boy, to smile and smile,
 While secret wounds do bleed beneath our cloaks :
 All this the dead feel not—the dead alone !
 Would I were with them."

LONGFELLOW.

It was still early in the evening when Mrs. Steyne, leaving her son with his book to keep his father company, quitted the house, and took the path which led direct to the pretty cottage of Cary Hinton. It stood somewhat out of the village, which saved the owner from much of the inquisitorial infliction to which each housekeeper was in turn subject ; but it was not too far, as we have seen, for those who, while doing their best to detract from the poor girl's share of merit, did not scruple to avail themselves of her good nature : in fact, poor Cary's shelves seldom displayed their full complement of those useful articles which belonged to them, being generally, in turns, on a progress through the village.

If dutch-ovens could blab, and copper kettles, in

their pleasant songs, echo a little of the tea-table chat at which they had assisted, the mistress might have been enlightened at times, if not particularly gratified.

But it had never troubled her, what they did or said: the sunshine in her heart had reflected itself in everything around her, till she could see no spot or blemish in anything. All was bright and good, and pleasant; and it was a beautiful world.

And now—as it ever is with these brightest spirits, and most lavish hearts,—they pour out their all ungrudgingly, they are beatified even in the bestowal, they sing hallelujahs to the glory they have shed about themselves, and fancy heaven is come to earth, Paradise restored for them—but human nature *is* human nature still—its laws are not reversed in their behalf. Too generous to ask, they still do hope, that for all given much may be returned. Nothing comes—and, lo! they are bankrupt.

A stronger head and cooler heart might have reasoned; but with the poor girl, to reason was but to drive still further the cruel goad that tortured her.

When Mrs. Steyne went in, after tapping at the door, she found her sitting before the table, on which tea was set, though she had evidently not tasted it. Her face was hidden in her hands, her hair, generally so neat, was pushed aside and roughened; the room was in disorder, the broken chair and table in one corner, the little vase, as the children had described, smashed in the fender, and the water spilled, while the poor flowers lay scattered and dying on the floor.

As she stood up, and took her hands from her face, Mrs. Steyne was shocked to see the change grief and

despair had made in the beautiful girl. Her cheeks were sunk and burning with fever, her eyes almost closed with crying, and in front of her, on the table, lay a piece of bread she had apparently endeavoured to eat, and failed ; it was soaked with the tears that dropped between her fingers.

Her hand was burning as she put it into that of Mrs. Steyne.

" I am afraid you are very ill, Mrs. Hinton," said the other, kindly. She had always felt interested in the young wife, though their acquaintance had been of the slightest. " I came to see if I could be of any service," she continued : " my children told me you seemed ill."

" You are very kind, ma'am. I should—I meant to have come and seen you to-day, though I don't see as you can do me any good ; but he forbid me ever to speak to you, or let any of you come inside the doors—even the children, ma'am, poor little dears ; and I've not a soul to speak to."

" What has set your husband against us, think you ?"

" I don't know, ma'am : I cannot say, indeed. It's something about the work, and this evening he's worse than ever. He came in a bit since, and was swearing, oh ! he did swear what he would do to Mr. Steyne—about some work of Mr. Crichton's, the publican's ; and he thought to get it, and he says Mr. Steyne's to have it.—See there, ma'am !"

She pointed to the floor, the other side the table, where lay the remains of a newly-made cake, apparently trampled under foot, and crushed to atoms.

" He used to be so fond of them—I made it on

purpose. I did hope, as it was Saturday, we might have a comfortable tea, and be a bit quiet; but he came in in such a temper, and he stormed, and cursed me, and smashed that glass—see ye there, ma'am! I brought them with me when I left my place to be married."

The young wife burst into another fit of crying, and clasped her hands before her face.

Mrs. Steyne sat down by her side, and with kind and soothing words attempted to console her.

"You're very good, ma'am. I do wish I had known you before. You see the women hereabouts, they go on so against him, and it does make me feel so bad. I can't bear to hear them, I can't."

"I am sure you cannot. I can quite understand you, my poor girl. I do indeed wish I had known your troubles sooner. Something of it I did guess; but it is so difficult to venture on such a sad subject. But you will come and see me now, and the children; they are so fond of you. They sent you these flowers."

"Bless them, and you too, ma'am. But I daren't, I daren't. He threatened me so. And I am so afraid for you, ma'am, if he should find you here."

"Never mind for me; I've no fear," said Mrs. Steyne.

"It was that hurt me so: it seemed so hard, when I've no friend, no one to speak to. You've got a happy home, ma'am—a kind husband—I thought I should once. It was all I wanted: I never cared for anything else. I didn't ask for company, nor for fine clothes, nor to go to fairs, nor dances, nor nothing,—only for him to love me, and to let me love him

and wait upon him, and keep all nice and happy; and see!—see!—” she looked round almost fiercely through her tears—“see what he’s made it! He hates me! he curses me! he won’t let me love him! Oh, my heart’s just broken—broken!

Mrs. Steyne’s lip quivered, and she could not for a moment speak. Presently she said—

“Poor girl! poor girl! I know how little anything I can say will comfort you. Yet if you would try—”

“Try! Haven’t I tried? Haven’t I coaxed him, and borne with him, and heard his cursing and threatening, and answered him never a word? Haven’t I sat, watching and waiting, and wouldn’t put so much as a cup of tea to my lips, till he came? Haven’t I sat facing him, evening after evening through, and him never opening his lips to me, to as much as thank me? Haven’t I tried to be sullen and cool too; but I couldn’t, because I love him? Haven’t I tried to think nothing about it, and to laugh it off; but I can’t, for my heart aches for him to love me? Haven’t I laid and cried the whole night long by his side till morning came, and never closed my eyes? And han’t he cursed me crying, and cursed me laughing? What *haven’t* I tried? It’s easy to say *try!*”

Then with a fresh burst of passionate tears—“Oh, I know I’m wrong to say all this! He’s my husband, he is—and maybe I’m not always right—and he’d never be so but for the drink! Oh, ma’am, forgive me! don’t think anything of what I’ve said. I wish I was dead! I do! I do! He won’t *let* me love him, he won’t—and I’ve nobody to love me!—*nobody to love me!*—”

She repeated the words several times, rocking herself to and fro, like one in great bodily pain.

Mrs. Steyne's eyes were turned to the ground, the tears were falling silently from them.

"You see," said she, gently, after a pause, "I do know something of what you suffer; for I know how vain it would be to offer any consolation. It would sound only like a mockery. But, dear Mrs. Hinton—"

"Oh, don't call me that!—call me Cary, please, dear ma'am."

The good woman sighed, and a troubled expression crossed her face.

"Do not bring yourself to believe that no one cares for you. Believe me, I do not say it idly. *I* care; and shall think of you, and pray for you, constantly. My children love you, and my husband often speaks of you as a pattern wife. If it be any comfort to you, my dear, believe we all think of you, and would serve you all we can. You must come and see us."

Cary shook her head.

"I should be the last to ask you to do anything contrary to your husband's wish; but why is reason given us if we are to blind and cripple it? Obedience might be carried to a sin, surely, in this way. It will be for your good, my dear, that you should come to us, it cannot harm anyone: use your own sense and judgment in all things. Be sure it was never meant that duty should be a punishment. We will see each other often; and you will for my sake, for your own health's sake, try and struggle against despair."

"God bless you, ma'am; you have made me feel better!"

As Mrs. Steyne reached the door, in advance of Mrs.
No. 6.

Hinton, she observed a young man, with the air and seeming of a gentleman, pass the house, and quickly disappear among the wild shrubbery which skirted the waste behind the cottage.

It passed rapidly through her mind that on one occasion before she had met the same figure, late in the evening, as she was returning from a walk with her husband—and close to Hinton's.

She stopped—came back ; and, closing the door, she said—

“ It is not so late as I thought. May I stay a little longer ? ”

“ Oh ma'am, and welcome : only if he should come.”

“ Never fear for me. I had it in my mind to tell you something, my dear ; and as we may not have another opportunity very soon, let me tell you now.

“ It is not a long story, but I know such true histories give us comfort at times.

“ It is of a young couple who lived some few years ago in London.

“ The husband had been well educated ; he had a great talent and liking for his profession ; and it was thought he would succeed extremely well.

“ He was the only son of a widow lady, who was so fond of him that she could deny him nothing ; and he was enabled to associate with young men very far above his station in life. The consequence was, that, being very easily persuaded, and of the most amiable disposition, he was led into all kinds of dissipation ; lent, and gave, and treated, right and left ; and, worse than all, neglected forming such connexions as would have been beneficial to him in his career.

“ His mother died suddenly ; and then it was found

that, above sufficient to discharge her debts, when all came to be settled, he had but a few pounds remaining in the world.

“ You may think, my dear, what a blow it was to one who had been led to imagine he had every prospect of moving on an equality with his old associates, and that his profession was to be but a secondary consideration.

“ His pride was hurt ; he found his hitherto good companions cool all of a sudden. Where he had been the life and soul of a whole fraternity, he now found himself actually rejected. Disgusted with everything, he hastily left London, and travelled down to a little village in the south, where some speculators had lately begun a grand building scheme ; something as it is here in Stillhaven. There, the very fact of his being from London soon got him employment ; and he, in his pride, rather choosing to astonish them by his unexpected skill, gave them to understand he was a mason : and as such they employed him.

“ But it was not long before his great talent showed itself. A church was just commenced ; he saw and pointed out some errors in the design, and, for a wonder, was listened to, and his own proposed alterations accepted. These were found such an improvement, that he began to be looked up to, and soon was set over others who on his first arrival looked down on his youth and inexperience,

“ Then in his work he surpassed them all. He loved it. Many a time he has spent half the night labouring at some piece in which he had grown interested. Two of the most beautiful figures in that church are his work.

“ Close to the church was a school, belonging to it ; or, I should say, to the old one, which had become quite unusable from age. The school was kept at that time by the daughter of the last curate of the old church, who had lived and served there upwards of thirty years, and was buried in the old churchyard.

“ Well, I suppose that the young man found the company of the young schoolmistress more agreeable than that of the other villagers ; and she, who had not many friends, was pleased with his preference ; however, they became acquainted, and soon got quite friends and were a great deal together ; and at last they found they had got so accustomed to each other that they really did not know how to part, and so they were married.

“ I do believe, my dear, there never was a happier couple than these two, during that first year of their marriage. She kept on her school, for she would not give it up while they stayed in the neighbourhood. He had profitable employment, and they lived in a beautiful little cottage, just outside the village.

“ For nearly two years they lived so pleasantly : they had one child, and all went on smoothly and happily. But after awhile his employment ceased ; the building mania had gone off ; and as he had long fancied he should be able to do much better in London, and his wife could not differ from him in any one thing, to London they went.

“ It was some time after they came to London before he obtained employment, and the wife did all she could, by giving lessons in music and drawing, and was successful in getting engagements, though at a very low rate.

“ At last the husband was obliged to content him-

self with such work as he could obtain ; far below what he had hoped and tried for.

" Still, between them, they managed very well, and were very happy. Their world was in each other's society, and the little London home seemed a paradise ; and the husband was never tired of decorating and improving it.

" But, after awhile, he began to grow dissatisfied with the station he occupied ; and one can hardly wonder, when he had been accustomed to expect something so different, and his capability was so far above his employment.

" Whilst he was in this mind he chanced to fall in with some of his former associates, and through them he hoped to get introduced to a higher position.

" He spent a great deal of time in their company, and present work was neglected in running after the new fancy.

" Little by little all the savings went ; the hopes they had raised deserted them, and he began to despair. A young wife sees only with her husband's eyes, and for a long while she could find no wrong ; till by degrees she became convinced of the sad truth that her husband had fallen into habits of drinking.

" He got more careless ; even her grief, which she could not conceal, seemed to drive him on. At times he would repent, and be all affection and kindness ; but the slightest temptation led him away again, and all went wrong.

" I will not make you unhappy by relating all the trials and privations these poor things went through. Your griefs are great, my dear : but fancy what hers must have been, in a strange city, with a little child

having to labour almost night and day to keep life and soul together; and in it all to maintain a patient temper and a hopeful spirit; to pray constantly against despair and temptation, and for strength to do her duty.

“Another poor babe was born, but did not live long; and in this season of sickness her husband became himself again, and was kind and watchful: but work was not to be had—the poor little home was stripped and turned into a wilderness.

“As soon as she was able, she got such employment as she could attend to at home; and though it was poorly paid, yet, with what the husband did, from time to time, they managed to struggle on for a long weary while; and in it all, one great comfort she had,—that he never, upon any single occasion, used harshness or violence to her—never even gave her a hasty word: while she had mercifully strength granted to her patiently to bear all, and to hope on, without reproaches or repining.

“And she was rewarded, my dear; when after this long dark trial came a season of light. A gentleman, who had known the young man's father, met him in the most casual way, and interested himself in him. He gave him work—not mere hand-work, but such as the poor fellow had longed for, for many a day.

“From that time things began to mend. Finding himself appreciated, the young man's self-respect returned; and while a man has that he will not go far wrong I believe. That is why I think it is so much the duty of every wife to do all she can to keep alive self-respect in a husband, and not by taunts and abuse to destroy it.

"Of himself he at once cast off all the old careless life he had been living. He blessed his wife, and thanked her for her forbearance and patience with him. But for it, he said, he knew he must have long ago put an end to his existence, in a fit of despair.

"Since then, all has gone well with them; and though he is not perhaps in the position his talents and education should procure for him, they are comfortable and happy."

"Ah, you are very very good, ma'am—so much better than me, ma'am! It's yourself you've been telling me about I'm sure. I never thought you had suffered so."

"I have never breathed a word of this before to anyone, my dear; neither should I to you, but that I hope it may be of service to you, and show you how it is possible to bear and hope even in the darkest hour; and how in trials, even such as yours, there is often a bright future in store. I know all the aching of your heart and the sinking of your soul, day after day, and night after night; I have felt, and understand it all; but, my dear, of one thing I am certain,—if you will but look, and ask, for strength from Him who sends your trial, He will not forget you. Oh, dear Mrs. Hinton, it is indeed so! You will find comfort and consolation coming from where you may least expect it: you will find new hope and life given you. Forgive me, my dear, for speaking so; but I am old enough in experience, and almost in years, to be your mother; and I am so sorry for you."

"Oh, if I had such a mother!" cried poor Cary; leaning her head upon the shoulder of the kind woman.

"Now, my dear, you will think of what I have told you ; you will struggle against despair, which is like death to every better feeling ; and remember that all you suffer, your friend has borne for many a weary year."

"No! no! you had your little children—you had them to love you!" cried the girl, her tears falling afresh, as the other rose to go.

She made no answer, but pressed the hand of the desolate girl, kissed her bowed head, and went out. She lingered a few moments in the garden, and then walked slowly in the direction of Birdiethorn.

The young wife sat with her head upon her hand, thinking ; the tears still wet upon her cheeks, and glistening on her eyelashes. Presently, with a sigh ; "Oh!"—said she, half aloud—"she is better than I shall ever be! I should break my heart, before half the time was past!"

Then she slowly approached the fireplace, and, kneeling, she collected two or three scattered fragments of paper, and laid them in the palm of her hand.

"Yes," she said, pondering, as again she made out the fragmentary morsels of a letter she had that morning destroyed indignantly—"he loves me, even altered and ill, and miserable as I am. What can he find to love in me?—a poor girl—and he that has such high, grand ladies to choose among! Only my love he asks. Ah! I could never love anybody again, in all the world, as I loved Tom—Poor Tom!—Ah, he *would* grieve then!—*He* says he does not care for me ; but he must care—Tom must, a little—see how I nursed him, and worked hard, all the while when he was ill—he can't but love me, surely!"

Again the tears were falling.

" *He* says his life depends on me—he must love me so much—he's remembered me all this while—when he was abroad and all—I oughtn't to make him unhappy, and he does seem so miserable. It is seeing me unhappy, he says—he only wants to see me comfortable; and he is the only one that cares for me in all the world. She said she did—ah! but she has her husband, and her children—she can't tell how bad it is to have not a soul—to lay one's poor head upon their shoulder and to put their arms about one—O Tom! Tom! *why* couldn't you love me?—*why* wouldn't you let me love you! I *did* love you so; I *did*!—Poor Tom! what would he do?—would he care much?—nobody else would—no one would fret for me. But who'd take care of him?—my husband!—and what would they call me?—what would I be?—oh, no! no! *no!* "

She started to her feet; tore the paper into smaller particles, and, picking them all up, with the faded flowers, she carried them to the back-door, and flung them out upon the waste.

Then, without allowing herself a moment for thought, she bustled about the room, clearing away all signs of disorder, and arranging all once more with wonted neatness.

She could not keep back the tears as she picked up the trampled cake, the cruel rejection of her poor peace-offering. But she dried them quickly, and bustled on, trying to be very brave, and thinking, with all her might, of good Mrs. Steyne's little history.

Her little companion in the cage, seeing her so active, began to twitter his approbation, and, in a few

bars, rose to such a strain of encouragement, that his mistress could not but feel cheered at it, and approached him.

"Sweet!" she cried to him, "I have neglected you, this day too, as I never did before. Sweet!"

The little creature hopped out upon her hand, whetted his tiny bill upon her lips, and then commenced anew his cheerful song.

"Sweet birdie! you sing better than ever to-night, you do!"

The door was dashed open violently. Though it was now long past twilight, she knew it could be no other than her liege lord.

"Tom, dear," she said timidly.

"Aye, 'Tom dear;' why the deuce ain't there a light so a fellow needn't to break his neck coming in? And why—curse me!—why ain't supper ready?"

"It shall be in one minute, dear; but you haven't had supper the last two or three nights."

"Well! and is that cause why I'm never to have no more again? What's thee about now?—be sharp, dost hear?"

"Yes, I am coming, Tom."

"I see, it's that cursed bird. Thee's always agate o' some foolery or another. — un! I'll wring un's neck!"

"Oh! don't hurt my bird, Tom!" she cried, as he approached.

The poor bird, unwilling to leave her finger, had occasioned a slight delay; she had just, with gentle force, returned him to the cage, when the man strode across the room, seized it, and with one twist of of his strong fingers flung it fluttering on the floor,

the joyous notes of his last song quivering in its throat.

With a shriek Cary flung herself upon the ground, beside her poor expiring favourite, and burst into tears, more violent than any she had ever before shed.

Still more exasperated, the man, with a furious oath, raised his foot to crush it to atoms; but she caught it up, and with the other hand pushed him from her—he reeled and fell. The next instant he was upon his feet.

“ — thee! thee shall pay for that!” And, with more fearful oaths than I care to set down, the husband rushed upon his wife, and grasped her, with his huge hands, about the throat.

Her cries died away in a faint gurgle, as he dragged her to her feet—still holding to her bosom the poor soft handful of what had been so long her only companion.

Almost as he seized her, the door was literally burst open, and a grasp—for the moment, stronger even than his—unclenched his cruel hold, and tore her from him; while a blow between the eyes sent him reeling across the room till he dropped in a corner.

Bruised and bleeding from that pitiless hand, fainting with horror and fear, the girl clung to the newcomer—and gasped—

“ Take me away! —oh, take me away!”

Even as the words passed her lips, she was carried from the house, and the door of her home had closed after her for ever.

When Hinton struggled to his feet, and rushed into the road, he heard nothing but the sound of a horse's hoofs flying along the road to Stillhaven.

Aye, virtuous village maids and matrons. Here be matter truly for shaking of heads and raising of eyes.

Softly, dear Mrs. Darby, she did not know the magic consolation of the bottle.

Good Mrs. Crump—she had not studied that golden rule whereby thou hast so thoroughly subjugated thy lawful liege, that he dare not even venture rashly to surmise to whom his own soul appertaineth.

Aye, lash with your heaviest thongs of reproach this backslider. Lose not one of the choice epithets she merits! Let all the world learn your purity and superiority to temptation.

Spare her not! if Virtue be not terrible to Vice, who knows but Vice might learn to love her!

No pity for such an offender!—truly she said none would weep for her.

But stay!—One does weep for her: yes, and bitterly reproaches herself she had not said more to warn and strengthen her; reproaches herself for leaving her alone that night; and prays for her, and would so joyfully fold her to her motherly heart, even now.

And is it you, Harriette Steyne!—you whose whole life has acted out those better things you did talk of but now—is it you who alone of all, sympathize with the sinner!

Scatter the rose-leaves wide as you may, they will not suffice to cover the thorns which strew the path she has chosen.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

A START IN LIFE.

“Yet ah ! why should they know their fate,
 Since sorrow never comes too late,
 And happiness too quickly flies,
 Thought would destroy their Paradise.
 No more—where ignorance is bliss,
 ’Tis folly to be wise !”

GRAY’S *Eton College*.

It was a pretty group the setting sun shone upon one evening in a mossy dell hard by old Piert’s Rest. Of course, had it been otherwise, the sunbeams would have lingered just as long among the bolls of the old trees ; yet one could not but fancy they took a pleasure in gilding the fair hair of the little child laid to sleep upon the bed of jackets, and that it ungrudgingly lent a part of its glory to make bright the landscape to the eyes of the two tired boys who lay stretched upon the grass beside her, and the little store of treasures over which one sleeping hand still kept guard—the plover’s eggs, the deserted nest, the corn and poppies, gathered in the day’s ramble.

The lads were talking in a subdued tone, waiting till the awakening of their little charge should permit them to return.

“You wouldn’t say so, if you was me, though,” said the elder ; “you dunno’ what it is to be like me ! I’ve no peace of my life at home, and I shan’t stop, I’ve made up my mind. See, I’m no better dressed than r

beggar-boy. Father gives her enough of money, but it all goes so——”

He put his hand to his mouth, tossing back his head, to imitate the act of drinking.

“Yes, I shall go to sea; I shall be all right there; and when I’m gone, they won’t be having words about me, that’s a comfort!”

“I’m sorry you’re going, Will. I like you best of any in the village.”

“We’ve been good friends, Phil, haven’t we? Though we did fight at first. We shan’t fight again, eh?”

“No, Will!” (There was a pause.) Presently.

“Suppose—only suppose, you know—that I was to come back in a many years, with lots of money, from India, or America, and you was a man, and Rose was a young lady, and suppose—if she didn’t mind—she was to be my wife, and we was all to live together with your mother; and that my mother was dead—eh, Phil?”

“Yes: but what makes you go to sea instead of anything else?”

“Why what else is there a man can do? See in the towns there, where they go to the warehouses and the mills, what a wretched life it is. Look at Dick Morse, a fine chap as he was, when his uncle took him to his mill at Bolton, and see now—why you wouldn’t think he was half my age, to look at him, so thin and little; and he’s two years older than me. Oh I like the free air and the sky, I do Phil, and the sunshine: I couldn’t breathe shut up in a shop! Ah! when I used to go out fishing with grandfather in his big boat!—that was fine! Ah, Phil, if I’d known you then!”

“Where is he now?”

"Oh, he's dead, poor fellow! He died just before mother; he was her father, and his was the last boat as fished hereabouts at all. A man at Liverpool bought it; and I mean to buy it again, as soon as I've got money enough. Grandfather could remember the smugglers; and he used to tell me about Piert and his man. It was him told me about the lady as was murdered at Birdiethorn; and about the groaning——"

"Hush!"—said Philip, raising his hand—"Rose is waking."

With a toss of her arm, and a sigh ending in a laugh, the little fairy awoke, and sat up; rubbed her two eyes, looked at her two guardians, and laughed again.

"I fought I was in bed, my Phil," she said, as he came to her side.

"Well, so you was in a bed, I think," he replied, lifting her to her feet, and taking up the friendly jackets, &c., while Rose gathered her treasures; and all prepared to start.

Here a little difficulty occurred. Rose's foot was asleep, and Will volunteered to carry her, but the child peremptorily refused. Then, her brother most willingly accepting the office, the collected curiosities must perforce be consigned to his companion, who gladly took charge of them, and carried them tenderly; while little Rose watched him, over her brother's shoulder, with jealous anxiety, and availed herself of the first opportunity to take to her feet and some part of her riches again.

At the gate of Birdiethorn, Will Darby left them; with a heartier good-bye and shake of the hand than boys are wont to part with: and even little Rose, for a wonder, gave him her hand, though with a hasty

gesture. She was within the house when the lad turned his head at the top of the lane, and took a last look at the cottage.

"I wonder if I shall ever see them again?" he half said, half thought to himself.

"Mother!" said Philip, as he sat by her side that evening, when little Rose had danced and played herself to sleep and to bed, "mother, what do you think? Will Darby says that once a great smuggler lived here, and he had a cave in the rock, where he used to hide up heaps and heaps of things, and once he took a ship with a beautiful lady in it; and everybody was killed but the lady, and he brought her here; and took away her beautiful chains and gold things; and then he shut her up, and starved her, and she pined away, and moaned, and cried; and at last she was almost dead, and they brought her out on the rock, and she saw the dead body of her husband that the sea had washed up, and she got away from them and threw herself into the water, and they got her out and then they fought; and one of them stabbed her, and threw her into the sea; and she was drowned; but she was thrown up again by the waves, mother, and laid in among those bramble-thorns; and there she was for a long while dead; till the winds and the waves washed her away: and her white clothes and her long hair were left sticking in the thorns; oh! for a long long while—and—wasn't it horrid, mother?"

"If it were true; but I do not think it is."

"Will says his grandfather told him: and this was called something else, mother; I forget—not Birdie-thorn."

"Oh, my dear, your own sense may tell you the reason of that name; it could hardly have a better. Hark at them now, Philip; pretty creatures!"

"Yes, mother; but he says that when there is going to be anybody die here, there is always a moaning in the cave somewhere under here; and people say it's the lady——"

"I thought you said the lady was dead."

"Yes, mother."

"Then how could she moan, or make any other sound? Use your own sense, my boy, and pray do not listen to any of these foolish stories. I hope you will not let your little sister hear anything so absurd: she is so young: it might frighten a baby, indeed."

Philip coloured; he was conscious of not having felt very comfortable in his own mind. "No, mother; I would not let Rosey hear it."

"And the less you talk to a boy who tells such tales the better. Our sweet quiet home, does it seem as if anything dreadful had ever happened here, Philip?"

"No, mother; but Will Darby did not mean to do wrong; and he'll not tell me any more tales, for he's going to sea."

"Going to sea!"

"Yes, mother; he is so miserable at home, he can't stay any longer."

"Indeed! And what does his mother say?"

"Oh, it's all through her! She is not his own mother, and she is unkind to him; and all the money his father gives for clothes, she spends in drink mother—in drink!"

The earnest eyes of the boy filled with tears, and his mother sighed as she stroked his head—

“And what does his father say, Philip? I think he is a good man.”

“Yes, mother, and Will is fond of him; but she tells such things of him—I think Will does not mean to let his father know.”

“Oh! I am indeed sorry to hear that. Philip, when you meet Will Darby again ask him to come in with you to his tea; we will talk to him, and see if we cannot persuade him to do better.”

“Thank you, mother! I like Will, he is so good to Rose—to-morrow, mother?”

“Yes.”

Away ran Philip, glad indeed to think he had interested one so all-powerful in his friend's behalf. Will had not enjoined him to secrecy; and it came so natural to tell mother everything. “How glad,” thought he, “Will will be to have his tea with mother and Rose to-morrow!”

“To-morrow—shall I reach Liverpool to-morrow I wonder, if I walk all night?” said Will Darby to himself, as he trudged along the by-paths and field-roads he knew so well; while

The stars came forth to listen
To the music of the sea.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

THE GOOD SHIP'S FREIGHT.

“ Of dying groans,
 And widows' tears, and orphans' moans ;
 And all that misery's hand bestows,
 To fill the catalogue of human woes.”

SCOTT.

MR. THOM was a right up-and-down man, without much consideration or beating about the bush in him he was a man, too, of hasty feelings and sharp conclusions—or he would not have taken the course he did with one who, as one instant of thought or one grain of discrimination would have told him, required a treatment the very opposite.

In the mood Steyne remained after his interview with Crichton, a little sober reasoning and recalling of facts, a judicious rousing of his sense of honour, and a calm exposition of the side on which his own interest lay, would most probably have effectually turned the scale; but he was not prepared for the sudden and almost defiant challenge which greeted him a few days after, when, if his mind were not actually made up, the balance decidedly inclined for the right side; since he had avoided Crichton from that evening, in spite of his promise to let him know his determination; and that he had not given the publican a

decided negative may be ascribed to his fear of being dissuaded from what he had resolved upon.

With this consciousness of his own good intentions, and by no means insufficient sense of the meritoriousness of his resolve, it certainly was hard to be taxed with desertion, with underhand proceedings, double dealing, and the like. But the warm-hearted, hot-headed Welshman, having got his own steam up, and being fully aware of the evanescent nature of the commodity, made the most of it; and, meeting with no interruption, thoroughly exhausted the supply. Unaccustomed as he was to any very remarkable results of such efforts, he might rather have congratulated himself upon the effect visible in this case; when, having concluded a very voluble harangue with the rather ineffective words—"The idea, sir!" he became aware that Steyne had quitted his work, packed his tools together, and, in fact, was apparently waiting only for the peroration, to leave his presence.

"And now you've done, sir, I'd be glad to know who told you such a lie, as that I thought of leaving the buildings at all?"

"Lie! why it's no lie,—you *are* going."

"I should think I was, sir! If there was never a stroke to be got in the place, it's queer to me if I stopped here after all you've said. But I had no more thought, Mr. Thom, of leaving you this morning as I came here, than I have of dying this moment. I'm very glad, sir, you *can* get as good men any day, and I'm sorry you think I'm ungrateful to your brother, who certainly has been kind to me; but I hope he'll not think so. And as for Crichton, if he is 'a scamp,' why I expect his money's as good as another man's;

and I suppose he thinks I'm worth it, or he wouldn't offer it."

If Mr. Thom was hasty, George was vain; if the employer was impetuous, the workman was obstinate; his vanity had been hurt, his obstinacy aroused; and he had been too lately flattered and sued to for the wound to be light. At that moment, if he had been offered double the money to stay, he would have refused. Steyne was not a passionate man, and could the less pardon or understand it in another: Mr. Thom could not appreciate the coolness, so took it as a sign that the whole affair was preconcerted.

"You meant to go, sir, that's plain; it's all true enough!" said the gentleman, warming again.

"Before I do go, I shall be glad if you'll let me have the name of the man who told you so," said George, quietly.

"Oh, its known well enough; they all know it! Hinton told me."

George walked away, made his own inquiries, and found, as he expected, that no one had even heard of ; and all were taken by surprise as much as he had been: so with Hinton the mischief had originated.

He left the buildings, where he had spent a good many pleasant hours—the pleasantest almost a man can know; certainly the most satisfactory—at work in which he delighted, and of which he was, perhaps excusably, proud.

And now what should he do?—He could ill bear to think how vexed Harriette would be, when she heard what had happened: and yet she must know it sooner or later. Well, at least he would get other work first—he knew what she would say though—want him to

make it up with Thom again, and that he would not ; so the best way would be to make sure of the new work, and there would be an end of it.

His step was very slow, as he took the road which led from the new town to Crichton's " Good Ship,"—he did not feel right at all.

" The fact is," said George to himself, " I've got into a mess ; I wish to Heaven I'd told him no, at once :—and that confounded fellow, Hinton, to do me such a bad turn. What business had Crichton to tell him so, when I had given him no answer ?"

There were not many at the " Good Ship ;" it was the quiet time ; and the landlord was gone up to the " Bluebottle" to look after the interests of that thriving establishment. George had nothing better to do than to wait for him ; and waiting for him, he must of course order something. But he cared so little for it that it stood before him almost untasted ; while he went over in his mind the stormy interview of the morning, and thought what he would say to Hinton, and almost resolving to give them all the lie, by not working for Crichton at all, and leaving Birdiethorn and Stillhaven at once.

" I'd do that if it wasn't for vexing her," he said, half to himself, as he looked up and down the columns of the London paper, without even seeing the letters.

" Well, Mr. Steyne !" cried a voice, entering the tap-room ; " so you're here ; and I'm glad to see you, though you've been rather long about your answer too ;" and he shook hands with Steyne.

" It seems you'd got my answer before I knew it myself, Mr. Crichton," said George. " There has been piece of work between Thom and myself over it.

You told Hinton that I was going to leave their work for yours; and he told Thom, who thought it sly in me, and told me so."

"I told Hinton nothing of the sort. He came to me—the same day, I believe it was—wanting to be taken on at mine, to be quit of the buildings; and I told him as I had given you the offer I must leave all to you. Nothing more decided was said."

"O, that was it! Then I shall know what to say to him!"

"Well, well; so you've left them! Don't drink that: come in here; and, while we talk over business, you will take a glass with me."

He opened the door of the small parlour where they had sat before; the window was open, and Steyne hastily closed it, though it was very warm. Crichton, having poured back the remains of the liquor Steyne had left, into its original emporium, now entered with a bottle and glasses in his hand.

It must have been an extraordinary occasion which spirited such a bottle from Mr. Crichton's stores; certainly not for his own table would he have drawn that sacred cork, which bottled down the representation of so many of his pleasant chinking idols. But, like many another of his class and shire, Richard Crichton was not niggardly in his hospitality. It seems really as if in the mere sight and touch of the beloved fetish lies the charm. The man who will press and almost bore you with the hospitalities of his board to-day, would most expressively "look at" you, if upon 'Change to-morrow you asked the loan of a sovereign.

He set George the example, and urged him to follow. "You know what you are drinking, eh?" he

asked—"that is a comfort. Now I doubt you have not tasted the equal to this even of its kind before. It is some credit to a man to have such a thing in his house! Egad I will be bound you might ask for it at three-fourths of the houses in Liverpool, and wouldn't get it. There are not many with such a cargo as the 'Good Ship!' By the way, Mr. Steyne, you know why I call it the 'Good Ship': a good ship keeps out water you know, and we do our best in that way. It's little water we see here, eh?"

Richard Crichton must have been exhilarated by the wine on the occasion, to venture even upon so poor a joke.

"So then," he said when their business and the bottle concluded together, "that is settled, and I am to give you"—(naming a sum less by some shillings than he had before offered).

"Yes," said George, carelessly; "but it was guineas you said."

"Nay, did I? Well if I did, why I must stick to it; but you will keep all as low as you can."

"Certainly," said George, with a flush of contempt at the meanness of the man whose service he had now entered upon.

The new work was to be begun next day. Crichton had set his heart upon seeing the new house open for Christmas, and Steyne promised to do his best that it should be.

"There is one thing, Mr. Crichton," George said, as the other was going into the bar: "I don't care for my wife to know of this; you need not let it go about more than you can help, just yet."

"Oh, you have not told her! Well, well, these women are——"

"My wife's as good a woman as ever breathed; too good for me maybe," said George abruptly; "but we mayn't agree on every subject."

"I see, I see," said Crichton as he went on to the bar.

So Steyne was to be builder and architect of "The Crichton." It was a step; a great step for him, who had hitherto always had to look somewhere to one above him.

Yet he felt very dissatisfied and ill at ease. He had done nothing blameable, at least that in another world would have been so; circumstances alone made his course objectionable. He was so painfully aware how, by a certain showing, it would look, even to himself; and he knew so well who could set it in that light; it was no wonder he shrank from telling her. It was strange too—he tried to persuade himself, when the pecuniary advantages would be so very much increased—why should she make any difficulty? But there, it was done, and couldn't be undone, and he settled it so; smothered, strangled as it were, that prying intruder, whatever it may be, that will so obtrude itself at times; but he could not bury it. He was trying to lose all cognizance, even of its corpse, in the columns of the *Times*, when he heard a coarse voice shout—

"—— him! yon's his cap; where be he? Ma word but I'll gie't un, I will so! I'll mark un!"

He threw open the door which led to the tap-room. Hinton and half-a dozen more were there. Tom had discovered the cap Steyne had left; and, three-parts drunk, was venting his spite by kicking, stamping, and spitting on it.

He did not see Steyne, till the latter said, angrily: "Now then, that's my cap! What's it done that you're serving it that way?"

"Curse thee; I'll serve thy head the same; I'll punse thee's brains out, I will so, if thee comes here!"

"I want to know what you made mischief up at the works for? saying what wasn't true—"

"Whar be my missus? thee — thief! thee'st best look out if she beant back again. I be sure thee'st lent her a hand to go!" For in the confusion of that night, and his own muddled brains, Tom's impression of the affair had not been of the clearest.

"Seethee, she war well enow till her got thick wi' thee's missis, and wur nearly allus someway agate wi' thy lot. But thee's best tell whar——"

"There, hold your fool's tongue, do!" shouted George, his temper rising, not the less easily, certainly, for the wine he had drunk. "You're just going on like this to hinder me asking you about the lies you told. What did you mean by it? A thrashing would do you good!"

The drunken giant lunged his huge mass upon the speaker, overturning benches and tables. The rest rose, anticipating a row.

He was a formidable opponent, drunk as he was: by sheer weight and size sufficient to crush his adversary, who awaited him very coolly.

True to his Lancashire instinct, he only sought to bear the other to the ground, and finish the business as he in his elegant phraseology had set forth: but George was aware of him, and had no inclination either to part with his brains on so short a notice, or to bandy fisticuffs with the man he detested. As he approached, Steyne caught him by the wrists, and with the hold of a vice wrung them round, as he threw the man from him with all his might. He reeled and

staggered for some moments, then righted himself with a cry of pain, and rushed upon George; but the fellow's hands were powerless from the grip of the other's fingers, so his more accustomed weapons were put into requisition. He raised his heavy clouted shoe for a tremendous kick; which Steyne avoiding by a quick movement, it fell upon another man, who, smarting under the blow, retaliated; turning not upon the offender, but upon him whose intended punishment he had received.

"Why doesn't thee tell the man whar his missis be?" roared he, with an oath, seasoned by the intense pain he felt.

Two more voices joined in that cry:—

"Aye, what dost want wi' the wench?—tell the man, do!"

"What should I know of the man's wife? you fools. And, if I did know, would I tell such a brute as he is?"

The wordy tumult became general, the party was divided; but the majority was against George.

"A London beggar, he is, nowt else!" said one, in those words revealing the true essence of their antipathy.

The secret consciousness in George's mind, that these very men would some of them be very shortly under his rule, and glad to court his favour, gave him power to restrain his indignation, and the strong wish he felt to return their insolence by blows, from which he had as yet refrained; but at a push, intentional or otherwise, from the last speaker, his fists clenched involuntarily, and the man toppled over a bench, backwards. No more was needed; the liquor, Mr. Crichton's boast, had been circulating

freely ; the weather was hot ; the men, with one or two exceptions, actuated by their instinctive animosity to the London man, and the onslaught was immediate.

Steyne had stood with his back against the door between tap-room and parlour ; this was burst open, and in the space he stood facing them, and with a few blows, old reminiscences of his early career, discomfited the first. But what was science against numbers ?

" You'd better cut it, Steyne," said one of the friendly, who had done his best to keep off the more furious.

" Ha ! hook it, old fellow, out at back !—they're too much for us, and they won't fight fair ! "

But before he could repulse, or act upon this advice, the door from the parlour to the yard was opened sharply, a hand dragged Steyne back, and slammed the intermediate door in the face of the foe ; as Mr. Crichton stepped in among them :

" I say, gentlemen, for heaven's sake be quiet !—here's a pretty piece of work—the constable's sent for—my word some of you will get locked up, and bring my house into trouble. Now, sit down, sit down ! and do be quiet ! Hark at those confounded women ! "

Sure enough, the news had rushed through the bar into the street and village, that there was a fight at the " Good Ship." Boys, women, and babies, had gathered outside, and one or two, on the belief of their husbands being in the affray, had raised an outcry.

The men, in wholesome dread of wives, constables, and stocks, quickly seated themselves, and assumed such an appearance of order as was possible, calling for more drink, which was supplied with almost magical

celerity ; while Mr. Crichton went out to the constable, and his attendant retinue of boy mob, to appease the disturbed official, by the sacrifice, of a worthless bar-lounger, who, in a fit of maudlin inspiration, was declaiming and ranting about the outer premises. "He was always creating a disturbance, and Mr. Crichton liked to keep his house respectable!" So the poor wretch was led off, alternately weeping and cursing, in the grasp of the constable, to be made an example of; and the next day to return and relate his grievance at the bar of the "Good Ship," provided his good genius should have helped him to some sort of coin; for Richard Crichton ran no score for such as he.

The landlord then returned to the parlour, where he had left Steyne.

"You're not hurt—no; well, that is all right. I am sorry you got into any difference with those fellows; they are a sad lot; but in trade we must not choose. Here is your cap. Will you take anything? No? Well, suppose you pass out this way—it opens on the lane. I shall see you to-morrow." He opened the door as he said these words; Steyne stepped out into the green lane, and—"Faver!"—said a voice, as a child ran and clasped his knees.

He looked down, and met the smiling face of his little Rose, lifted up for the kiss that never failed to greet her. Her brother stood beside her, a basket on his arm. They had been to the village; and in returning, had gone round by the green lane to avoid the crowd which still hung about the public-house, a sight which the boy so disliked; and now had chanced upon that of his father slipping out the back way, his usually neat dress stained and disordered, his cap

torn, his handsome face flushed, and with an expression which haunted the son's memories of long ago, like a nightmare.

"Yours?" asked the publican.

"Yes"—in a low voice.

"Well, I am much obliged to you for stepping in as you did, and helping me to quiet those fellows. Thank you, Mr. Steyne. Good day."

The earnest eyes of the boy were raised to his father's face, as the publican spoke; but his were turned away. He did not even return the speaker's look of significance; for he knew what Crichton could not—he felt that his boy was as aware of the falsehood as he; and at that moment George would have forfeited all his hopes from the great step in prospect to have been clear of that poor child's gaze.

The door was shut. Carrying Rose upon his arm, with Philip at his side, the father turned into the fields.

He never spoke a word, not in answer to all the prattle of his baby-girl, who stroked his face, and twined her fingers in his tumbled hair, and kissed his wine-stained lips, all unconsciously.

As for Philip, he walked in silence at his father's side. Heaven alone knows what thoughts were in the boy's mind; how bitterly the knowledge of a father's unworthiness entered it, and refused to be banished. The same idea may have been in the mind of each.

"Will he tell her?"

"Ah! I won't let mother know."

And as if the boy had read his father's thought and answered it; just as they turned into the lane, past the old church, he slid his hand into that of his

father's, and, though it was not clasped, he let it lie there.

As they came to the churchyard, they saw Mrs. Steyne in her old seat at work, where she could see the road by which he usually returned.

"There's mother!" said Philip. "Shall I run to her, father, while you go on?"

"Yes, do, Philip;" and he let the boy's hand go. "I am tired, and will have a wash before tea."

If the lad's feet were not quite so quick as usual, he went up to her with a merry smile.

"Father is tired, mother, and has gone on to have a wash. I've got all you told me. I'll put your work in the basket too, shall I?"

"Yes, my dear. Father did not come home the usual way, then? Did you meet him?"

"Yes, mother; we came across the fields."

There was nothing unusual in that, as Steyne sometimes accompanied a workman, or Mr. Thom, part of the way to the village, and returned by the pleasantest, though longest, way, across the fields.

The happy mother took her boy's hand, and hastened home, as fast as Philip's little delays with his basket, or some uncommon wayside object, would allow; his mother repeatedly urging him that father would want his tea.

Little she thought how thankful her husband was for that delay, or that her boy's involuntary deceit was in his father's behalf.

When they got in, Steyne was sitting, washed and refreshed, in his own place, looking out upon the garden; while little Rose was making strenuous efforts to finish arranging the tea table before their arrival,

and greeted them with loud protestations against any interference in the duties she had assumed.

Philip's first anxious glance was at his father ; and his heart was lightened to see how cheerful he looked, and how he greeted his wife, and laughed with her at Rose's original style of table-setting, and tossed the child in his arms. Let us hope the lesson went no further—that the boy did *not* notice the adroitness with which he evaded his wife's kiss, nor the sprig of rosemary which he kept constantly chewing, till tea was ready.

It would have been pitiful, to one who knew all, to see the care with which that man avoided his son's look—the anxiety with which the boy strove, in mute language, to re-assure his father ; to let him know, as it were, that his secret was safe ; which the father so well knew. Pitiful, too, to think that the love which in that child he counted on, to save his mother from a painful knowledge in him, her husband, had not strength to hinder him from the sin.

" You were so tired, dear, Philip tells me ; and you carried that great girl : she is getting too big to be carried now."

" Es ; tarried me all e' way from—"

" All through the fields, Rosey, father did ; and you are a weight, that you are !" —put in Philip.

She had taken her old seat upon her father's knee ; she had always been his pet and darling, though he was fond of his boy, too ; but, whether won by her beauty, by the association with the more prosperous times which her sunny birth had heralded, and the contrast of that with which poor Philip was connected, certain it was Rose was the favourite.

And, indeed, the boy was not one to win upon those who are taken by outward appearances. As the gossips used to say, Philip was out of sight when beauty was given away. His large dark-grey eyes were the best features in his face; so full of that deep wistful look that one notices so particularly in those of a stag, and in some dogs, (but the simile is not mine; a writer has made a lover observe it of his mistress's eye, and a beautiful attribute it is). The nose and chin were too firmly developed for one so young, the mouth rather large, and the lips thin, the upper one so short that it rarely closed over the very white teeth within. The privations of his younger days had, perhaps, contributed to the paleness, which now seemed natural to him; and the grave look, and dark circles around his eyes, gave him a general likeness to his mother, though no one of his features resembled hers exactly. But Philip was by no means a dull or melancholy boy; he enjoyed the society of his own age, when he could find it suitable; and for fun he was a very treasure to Rose, whom he this evening succeeded in enticing from her established seat, into the garden, where her merry laughter testified to her enjoyment, as she ran to and fro to the window, proclaiming all the wonderful doings of "My Phil."

The mother had seldom felt happier than she did that evening—all her treasures about her—all seeming to promise so fair. After the years of tossing and storm, it was a blessed haven of peace to have found. Her husband too, so appreciated, and estimated as he deserved to be; for it was but the evening before, that, meeting Mr. Thom—to whom she was slightly

known, through his brother in London—she had listened delightedly to a long panegyric upon her husband's talent and abilities.

"I ought not to tell you, I know," she said, smiling, as she repeated, almost word for word, what had been said; "but it is such happiness to hear anyone speak well of you."

Then she noticed that he looked heavy and dull, and prevailed upon him to go and sit in the arbour, where, as the sun had gone down, it would be cool and pleasant. The children were admonished to be quiet, a cushion from the couch was shaken, and carefully arranged for his head to lean against; and she returned to her household affairs, full of pleasant thoughts and bright anticipations.

She was busy in her dairy, when a shadow passed the window, and, looking up, she saw Crump entering the house.

Mrs. Steyne welcomed him heartily, for he was friendly with her husband. She would have been glad to have improved her acquaintance with the good man's wife, but that Mrs. Crump's own dread, of what she alleged to be Mrs. Steyne's pride, forbade.

"Have you taken tea, Mr. Crump?"

"Yes," he said; that is as much as he wanted.

"I couldn't help coming, I couldn't—" he went on: "Where is the master?—is he in? I do feel so sorry: I wanted to talk to him, and try to get him to think it over: I do think it's standing in his own light, I do."

"What?—what is it? Mr. Crump," Mrs. Steyne said, in amazement.

“Han’t he told you? O dear, I’m sorry I spoke, I am! Well I did think he’d ha’ told you, first thing. Dear, dear, now, I ha’ done wrong, I doubt!”

Then, by way of amends, he went on to tell all he knew: that Steyne had left his work at the church, and had, so they said, undertaken to build Master Orichton’s new public.

Harriette listened in amazement and sorrow. Less perhaps for the evil step she felt it to be, than for her husband’s concealment; which so truly told her that he himself misdoubted what he had done.

Her face must have expressed something of her feelings; for poor Crump hastened to say—“I make no doubt but Master Orichton pays well; he is that chap to get a thing done to his mind: its like he’ll pay well.”

“Oh, it is not that,” Mrs. Steyne said with a sigh—and more to herself than to her visitor.

A voice now called in at the window. It was little Rose hailing the arrival of Mr. Crump, who was a sworn friend and admirer of the merry child.

Do not say you have told me,” murmured Harriette, as he took the hand of her little daughter, and went to find Steyne. “He will rather tell me himself,” she added.

A cloud had fallen over all her pleasant fancies, so soon; so trivial a cause it seemed, to dim her happiness: but, alas! she had learned from bitter experience. She knew what temptation and circumstance were to him; how little firmness or principle helped him against them. That cruel truth, which a woman never admits, even to herself, in all its extent—the weakness of him who should have been her strength—had so

come home to her: she had suffered so terribly by its results: and of late she had learned so to hope for the future, and forget the past in the sunny present. And here all was back again. That foul blot which made talent, industry, education, so little to avail.

Why had he hidden it from her?—to save her pain, perhaps. But, then, why had he done what he knew, he must know, would be so full of danger to himself?

Philip came in to look for some papers his father wished Mr. Crump to see.

“Mother, does your head ache? You look so pale!”

“Yes, my dear, a little. How is father’s head now?”

“I think it’s better, mother; he’s talking and laughing to Mr. Crump.”

So he was laughing, as he listened to the description of poor Mr. Thom’s discomfiture, when he aroused to the reality of Steyne’s departure; and the impossibility of very quickly supplying his place; and when, getting wrath even with the originator of the report, he dismissed Hinton summarily, for drunkenness.

So that was the cause of his irascibility that evening at the public-house.

“I am sorry—” Crump went on to say—“I don’t doubt it’ll be nothing lost to me. ‘It’s an ill wind blows nobody good,’ and it’s likely I’ll be put on a bit, leastways till they get fresh hands. But ah! Mr. Steyne, I’d not care for that, to have you back. It seems so natural to have you with us; and I am afraid it’s standing in your own light; for Crichton’s a hard man, there’s a many knows that: and when that place of his is done,—which I’m told it’s to be at Christmas,—you see there’ll be nothing else; and

it's likely by then Mr. Thom will have suited himself."

Steyne knew all this; of course he did; and was not at all pleased to have it put so plain before him.

"The long and the short of it is, I've struck a bargain, and I'll abide by it," said he.

"Ah! well, if that's it: but you're not offended, I hope, with me speaking."

"Not I! You're a good fellow, Crump: you should have been a Londoner; upon my life you should!"

"Well, who knows; perhaps I was born there."

"Weren't you born in these parts?"

"No: oh no!"

"I thought not.—Rosey won't you come and sing a song for your Mr. Crump?"

Rosey's stock of accomplishments were always at the service of her rough friend: and in a few minutes Harriette, looking out, saw her little daughter twirling and tripping, in her fantastic way; while her delighted audience laughed and admired to her heart's content.

"How gay he seems," thought she; "he has some good reason for what he has done; he will tell me to-night."

But many nights, and many days, came and went; and the secret, which was none to her, did not pass his lips.

She seldom walked up the hill to where "Piert's Rest."—Dame Mabberly's ancient hostelry—was undergoing rapid demolition; least of all would she have gone that way now, to "find out" what he thought fit to hide from her. She and the children still went the old way to meet him; and it often cost George a roundabout walk; at other times a lie (so called white,

but black, in fact, as any other), to reconcile his new locality with the pretence of that which he imagined she believed it still to be.

The man who so readily faced a roomful of drunken brawlers—who would have shrunk from no material danger that could have visited him—was a coward with the woman he loved; as gentle and loving a one as ever man took to wife. That terrible false pride which can acknowledge no error—that morbid repugnance to admit even the advice or warning of another; never so wise, never so good or humble—are they not at the root of all moral cowardice?

“Seems so queer to me,” as honest Crump said to himself, going home that night. “Now I can’t abide to have any mortal thing on my mind: out it comes! and if she blows up, why she do; and its done with and over. She knows the worst, and so do I. Well, there is a difference in people for sure!”

Aye, there is, wonderful difference in the aspect of things as we view them through those mental spectacles, of each his own. And that difference, is it not chief among the wranglings and jarrings, misapprehensions and repinings, which afflict this mortal state?

Pretty, pettish, childish Cary Deering, now, would have made herself happy enough with George’s endearments, and have sought no further; when he returned at night, and put his arm about her, or fondled the children, or worked in the garden, and evaded any remark of his son’s about the work he supposed his father still occupied upon; and if she had known the falsehood, she would have, in all probability, taxed him with it, and there have ended; satisfied in his next caress that he loved her.

But here was another, vexed in spirit and ill at ease, because she could not blind herself to an imperfection in the man she loved, to whom, even to let him know she was aware of his unworthiness, was so painful as to be impossible.

The woman's soul sickened at the mutual deceit, for she felt it to be so ; but she did so long for him to tell her of it : she hoped and desired so earnestly that he would yet change his mind, until she found it was too late, and from another source heard the news ; and still she could not bear to convey to him the reproach of his want of confidence in her. In old times she had learned to dread this coward habit, and the evils it so generally portended.

Then she would try to reconcile herself to believe he was right—that she was foolishly anxious—that he must have a good reason—anything, in short, to make him all worthy of her confidence and love ; to raise him to a standard to which she might look *up*, as is the nature of women to do.

The old, old story.

Alas ! that by the power of love—as stirring most deeply the loftier nature—the upright has bent, the true and bright faltered, and faded, and grown dim ; stooped all, to become as and of that which it loves and pities, and weeps for ; but can never raise, nor teach to see, to walk, to live by its own clear light.

Oh vexed and unsuccessful trial ! oh irreconcilable differences of poor human nature ! who can hope to reconcile them ?

CHAPTER NINTH.

FORGING OF FETTERS.

" You a man !—
You lack a man's heart !"

SHAKESPEARE.

" How perfect
Grows belief !
Well, this cold clay-clod
Was man's heart,
Crumble it—and what comes next ?
Is it God ?"

ROBERT BROWNING.

THE bosky shades of Birdiethorn were fast deepening into darker tints ; the scentless beauties of the sleepy-eyed Autumn were taking the place of the less gay, but sweeter, sisterhood of Summer ; heavier fell the night-dews upon the mossy paths, and on the harvest-fields hung the gossamer webs of fairy looms.

Night after night the hunter's moon queened it, in a cloudless unfathomable space ; while beneath, hardly less calm, slept the solemn sea, where each day's glory sought an earlier rest, yet lingered even longer in a last farewell.

The white cottage was closed, dust was gathering upon its windows, and over the threshold the damp green mould crept stealthily. The small garden was fast choking with rank weeds that spring and spread so quickly in the richest soil. The thistle and the

dock elbowed the tulip ; the wild nettle towered over the geranium. The roses, that the young mistress had once been proud of, now hung fading, and, with the first breeze that blew, would scatter the waste and the trodden highway.

A padlock and chain were upon the gate, where so often she had stood awaiting her husband ; all the comfortable furniture had been consigned to a broker for what it would fetch. It was a home no longer.

Tom Hinton lodged in the village, and worked at the new public-house, under George Steyne, whom he hated. Nothing had since been heard of his unhappy wife. Her disappearance had been a nine days' wonder, hardly that, followed so closely as it was by that of poor Will Darby. The boy's absence for a day or two at a time was such a common occurrence that it created no surprise, till, on the third day, Philip Steyne made known his fears, and furnished the only clue obtainable to his flight.

This the poor father hastened to follow, slight as it was. The result he made known to none ; but returned after some days, more reserved and quiet than ever ; not sorry, perhaps, that the lad had escaped a lot than which scarce any could be more unhappy. Meanwhile Mrs. Darby shared her trouble and its consolation among her intimates, as she expatiated on all she had done, and "gone through," for that ungrateful lad.

With such speed and determination had the new builder and his men worked, that "The Crichton" began to assume definite form and shape, and out of its goodly proportions to give promise of being indeed,

as its owner had said, the pride of the town; so far as taste in design, and skill in execution, could make it.

George's secret had ceased to be one: as such things generally do, it had come to light in the most simple, yet unexpected manner; and his wife's quiet expression of wonder that he had not told her before, with her earnest, yet affectionate, regret that he should have changed his employer, would have gone to the heart of a harder man than Steyne.

"I thought you knew it," was all he could say, when, by the merest accident of Crichton calling in the evening to speak to him, she had apparently learned the truth.

"I did know it, dear, a long time I've known it; but I thought you would tell me."

"Well, it makes no difference now, Harriette."

"I am very sorry, George dear, very sorry; I would rather you worked for anybody at anything else."

"Oh! I am all right, Harriette; you need not to be afraid; I am not such a fool."

"We must hope for the best! It cannot be helped now; so we will say no more about it, dear."

That was all. No scolding; no bringing up of old grievances; no reminder of old resolutions broken and cast away. He felt small; he might as well have told her at first; he knew how she hated anything like deceit. "Why the deuce couldn't he have told her?" He was angry with himself, and angry with her, that he felt lessened in his own opinion.

Surely he might choose his own master! He was not a boy, to go seeking advice, and so forth; he was all right, and what need she trouble; he might have been

long enough with Thom and those, before he got the standing he held now, with much more of the flattering unction ; all of which had but small effect, if we may judge from the fact that Steyne found it more pleasant to remain, after work that evening, with Crichton in his parlour (whither he had walked with him, holding a consultation upon the work in hand) than to go home to meet the wife whom he chose to fancy sat in judgment on his conduct.

That was some time past now ; but that, which had then been a rare occurrence, got to be very little so in the course of a few weeks. The period fixed for the completion of the building made it necessary, in fact, that all should work overtime ; and George was often at it late in the evening.

But he really loved his work, and his vanity was largely flattered with the unmixed admiration his efforts won from all with whom he was at present associated.

With that unvarying instinct, which led Richard Crichton ever on the true scent, he had caused some temporary buildings to be erected, serving at once as an office for himself and his head man, and a store where were procurable every species of refreshment for the numerous workmen engaged on the building. That keen eye to the main chance which never deserted its true worshipper, clearly showed him the double advantage of being at once his own surveyor and overlooker of the work, and of his bar ; while the pleasant under-current of the chinking symphony which kept quietly gliding in, was most soothing to his anxious impatience ; and the importance of having

good and plentiful liquor always at hand cannot fail to be perceived and acknowledged by all.

One of the results of George's secret was his failing to inform his wife of the advance in his gains; and now that she had learned the truth, it was somehow not quite convenient to mention it. Perhaps Mr. Crichton's liberality in the matter of drink ceased with the conclusion of the bargain; perhaps George, finding himself with a considerable surplus in hand, gave way to his desire of conciliating hostile spirits, and so won alcoholic opinions of his men. One thing is certain,—that at this time he had a considerable account against him at the little emporium, where in the cosy office he frequently smoked a pipe and listened to the gratifying approval of his employer and host.

Still the same amount as heretofore was given into Harriette's keeping, with at times something more; she missed nothing, so had no cause of complaint; and with that unction to his soul, her husband ordered another glass, and one for honest Crump, who had dropped in to look at him, and to admire and wonder at his progress.

To the visible effects of that last glass we may lay the start and the shudder with which his wife met him at the door; when, much later than usual, he entered the house; for the walks to meet him had long been given up, the evenings were chilly, the mother and children took their stroll early, and never past "The Crichton," and they were now in bed.

She looked at him a minute or two, as she moved about, getting ready the supper: several times she

forced herself to turn her eyes away, but something seemed to bring them back, despite her. At last all was ready, and she sat down, helped him and herself; but with the first morsel she put into her mouth she choked, and the tears began to fall over her hands, and upon her plate.

Stejne heard, understood, but said nothing. She struggled with herself, but in vain, to be calm; then she turned to him, and caught his hands in hers.

“O George! dear George! I knew it would be so; I was afraid—”

To that last incense offered to his vanity may be attributed, that the man, hardening himself to her tears, put her coldly from him.

“What is the matter, now?” he said. “This is fine, truly, for a man to come home to. I declare the only hard word I get is at my own house. It’s all smooth sailing till I enter my own doors.”

“O, George, forgive me! but you know you have promised so many times, dear. I have noticed it before, but I would not say anything. I was fearful how it would be, when you went to work for that man—O George!”—and she would have laid her hand upon his arm; but he turned from her with a hasty movement that threw it off:—

“All this fuss about my taking a glass!

“More than a glass dear, more than a glass.”

“Now do hush, Harriette; do not make a fellow hate his home! If I had come in rolling drunk you couldn’t be worse!”

The cold tone of injured innocence did more to silence her than curses could have done. She turned

dejectedly away, and finished her supper as best she could, debating in her woman's mind whether she had not indeed wounded him by her mistrust; whether thus to argue from the past were not ungenerous, when he had too, for such a length of time, given her no cause for uneasiness. So she at last brought herself to a comfortable state of self-reproach, which became apparent in the gentleness of her words and actions, that seemed to ask his pardon. The superior being was not slow to perceive it, and accepted the atonement graciously: so gradually all subsided into calm.

This brief sketch may suffice for many such scenes, which followed at intervals only; for Steyne did not then love liquor for its own sake. He was not of the ware from which the mere ale- or wine-bibbing sot is formed. From coarse and vulgar habits he was particularly free; and in the talk of the tap-room clique there certainly would have been little to gratify him, had it not so frequently ministered to his vanity. He had become a man of note; the men whom he employed, alike with him whom he served, knew their own interest too well not to be lavish in their praise; and the man's ruling passion, unfortunately for him, found ample food, except in one direction, where he chose to feel it wounded.

Old and sad are the examples, by which the unworthiness of a man's other self has driven him to seek consolation in the companionship of the tavern. Less frequent maybe, not less sad, are those, of which George Steyne's is one, in which cowardice and false pride, urge a man to fly from one whose silent regret is his reproach; whose light makes but more visible

his darkness; whose gentle forbearance is the coal of fire, which stings him to remorse, but not to repentance.

Little by little George's evenings at home grew to be rare exceptions; and the pressing nature of his work made excuse unnecessary. Now and again, indeed, would come a better season, a brief one, but enough to cause the wife to beckon back hope, and clasp it to her heart with a right smiling welcome. Then—and it was generally the heaven of his Sundays at home which aroused his better self—little Rose would revel in father's untiring good-nature; then the adventures and exploits of the last week would be related with renewed zest; then Philip, leaning upon father's chair, would watch his face to catch the expression of a wish even unspoken, and fly to wait upon each and all, satisfied with the small grains of notice and affection which fell to his lot when Rose was by.

Those Sundays at home.—Days looked back to, through an after life-time, by some of the little group—which no splendour, riches, nor wealth of love, nor admiration, nor gift of power, ever equalled!—Days when the sun shone, the birds sang, the flowers blossomed with an extra fragrance, for the especial Sabbath: when the waves' murmur on the beach was hushed, and the sun went down into a sea of glory, which would not be equalled again until the next Sunday came. So they fancied, so believed; and which of us has greater hold upon Truth's skirts, than his belief gives him?

Those bright mornings, those little surprises of some

new dress, or pet attire, so long laid aside, so restored by the dear mother's hand, as to be new. Those dinners, beyond all power of skill, so nice, so neatly spread, so suited to his taste for whom thought was everywhere. Those afternoons in the arbour, the reading aloud, the quiet chat, the mother's song, and father's music, now so seldom heard. The garland-making, or the quiet play, while father slept, and mother set the tea ; at which was never wanting some home-made dainty that might have been fairy-work. Then the sweet solemn service in the ancient church, the sunset stealing slowly by the painted windows—athwart the grey head of the old minister—giving him too that sabbath glory all else wore. The long twilight ramble, when Rosey was brought home sleeping in father's arms—the simple supper, the prayer at mother's knee ; and bed, and dreams that belong only to childhood.—A Sunday so spent, would seem often to awake in George his better self ; and a return to his old habits and affectionate manner was Harriette's reward ; for she wisely refrained, even at such times, from "improving the occasion," as some would have done, by a lecture, or advice ; studying only, by loving service and attention, to point the moral of a truer home-sermon than words could ever utter.

If women did but know and understand their own importance !—It seems, indeed, a superfluous admonition to the sex to esteem itself more highly ; yet how many fatally underrate their own influence and importance for good. If they would but understand how great is their power—greatest over the wisest and the best : if they would but use it rightly, nor fritter

away in petty strife, and painful useless cabal, and unjust complaints, that mighty strength, which was never granted them for such an end.

But the false pride, the miserable self-esteem, would again overcome the better impulse: each time the man forgot his duty and sinned against his own happiness it was harder to go home, and easier to remain among those whose life gave at least no reproach to him—where he was, in fact, growing in importance and authority; and the habit began to gain upon him with the celerity of all habits upon a weak unexamining mind. Often from the work he would walk down to the “Good Ship,” in company with one or two of the men, and finish his evening there; stifling his conscience still with the knowledge that he had never yet subtracted a penny from the amount he continued to give his wife as in his former employment.

Harriette would gladly have forfeited all the money to see her husband return as he had once done,—to be quit of that flushed oppressed look, that impatient querulous tone, which told her how, less and less, he could brook expostulation; and knowing intuitively how little it would serve. She redoubled her care for him, she set many innocent small lures to win him earlier home; pretexts of this or that to be done in house or garden: with Rosey’s winsome little face she ventured to speculate, teaching her pretty lisping phrases to beg father take her here or there; and that bait for a time succeeded.

For of late Philip was seldom his father’s companion; he seemed to share with the boy the feeling he had for his mother; he almost disliked him for the silent pleading of his childish attentions, for the unspoken

sympathy with his mother's care. Then, hating himself in the consciousness of such a feeling, he avoided the cause; his favourite child became the companion of his rambles; and mother and son were often left together, while Rosey strolled away hand in hand with father, to be absent perhaps for hours, and to be brought back sleeping soundly in his arms.

Hard for a wife to make even this a matter of thankfulness; hard to feel, to know, that her husband's heart was cooling towards her, for his own follies—that she had given her all, and it was rejected.

Once, taking the occasion of his returning home to her early in the evening, in a kinder mood than usual, she spoke tenderly, yet with earnestness, even thanking him for the blessing of that evening:—"If you did but know how happy it makes me to have you with me dear——"

"Well, dear, then be happy, and don't think about anything else."

"Yes, dear George; but other evenings, so often, when we might be always like this; and I am sure you would be happier, love, to come home."

"I must attend to work; Harriette, mustn't I? You would be first to complain."

"Dear George, it is not that; but the drink, love, that terrible——"

"Yes; there, I thought that was coming. If that isn't like you women; you are never content: you must be complaining, and finding fault about something."

"I was not finding fault, George: but have you forgotten our dreadful sufferings?—and how you have promised?"

"Thank you!—throwing up that in my face! That is what I get by coming home to spend my evenings with you."

He drew his arm away, and walked into the garden, in the twilight. For a moment she felt anger, indignation—the next, she had followed him, and stood by his side, her arm upon his shoulder.

"George; husband; is there anything I can do to make home more comfortable; to make you love it more? I know you are often tired when you come home, and I have sent the children to bed earlier the last few nights: do tell me. I don't mean to find fault. I know how hard you work, how clever you are: tell me what I should do; for my heart is just breaking."

"What on earth for! Don't you have my money, every penny? Don't I work like a slave? Haven't you a comfortable home?—What would the girl have!"

"Only that you would be as you were but a little while ago; only that you would come home as you have to-night, George; only that I may not tremble for you; to see you, as in the old times, giving way to temptation, that may end in your ruin; George, dear, do pray think; do not be angry—it is my love for you, dear——"

"Then I'd a precious sight sooner you did not love me, if this is to be it!—and, once for all, I won't be preached to, and taken to task, so I tell you. You are never satisfied; and I tell you it's just the way to drive me from the place altogether; so let me have no more of it."

She lifted her dark earnest eyes to his, in the moon-

light. The look might have been a recall of all they had spoken one moonlight night, many years ago; when his looked into them, promising, questioning—they were turned away now—her hand clenched, but it was to still the trembling: she walked into the house. By and by he came in, whistling: found her sitting quietly at work, and supper awaiting him.

She did not even turn aside to her children's room that night as she went to her own. Cold and silent as himself, she spoke not a word: but, when the night was far spent, the healing spirit came, and she wept quietly, sadly, but humbly: and at last fell asleep in that trust which alone was left her now; in a source to which—oh, happily for her!—she had learned to look; one unchangeable, unforsaking.

CHAPTER TENTH.

A MUSICAL LION.—THANKSGIVINGS.

"Arouse ye then !
 My merrie, merrie men !
 For 'tis our opening day !"

JOANNA BAILLIE.

A TERRIBLE lapse in the fitness of things and seasons ; dear to the heart of story-teller ; that the first pure soft snow of that winter should have baptized the bold front of the newly-finished tavern.

But so it was ; we cannot alter these things. A howling wind, and desolate sky, would perhaps better have befitted the ceremony, than the soft noiseless shower which fell like an angel's benison.

For it wanted a week of Christmas, and "The Crichton" was finished, fitted, furnished, and to be opened that very day.

It was a fine building ; not all the meretricious gauds and glitter—Richard's baits, which his great instinct told him were needful in his trade—could wholly spoil it. Expense was not spared by one whose cruel experience told him that for every shilling spent he should reap hundredfold eventually ; and what was it to him if every penny had been cooled in human blood, hot from the mint of the great master in whose chief agent he trafficked ?

A great cattle fair had been held, not far from that

neighbourhood ; and the news of the grand new public had spread among the townspeople far and wide. As the day drew on, they literally thronged the premises. A band of music was stationed in a temporary building without, a couple of musicians in an upstairs room ; in every grate huge fires roared ; a cartload of evergreens had been employed in the decoration of the interior ; and from the gallery on the top of the house waved (alas for its degradation to such a site !) the British flag.

Savoury eatables of all descriptions were provided, in a quantity which would have seemed more creditable to the imagination than the calculation of the caterer, at an earlier period of the day. In particular, a species of highly-seasoned pie, much in favour in that locality, was announced to be given gratis to each purchaser of liquor to a certain amount ; and loud were the laudations of such liberality ; the entire disinterestedness of which it did not enter the minds of any to doubt.

I need scarcely enter into a description of that day's proceedings. Few of my readers but have at some time looked upon such a scene ; the hilarity of this increased by the season.

In one long covered building in the rear, quoits and bowls were going on ; in a room upstairs billiards, draughts, cards, and dice, had attracted a goodly number ; in the next, couples were already following in some sort the enlivening sounds of the music ; while in another the voices of men and women mingled in glee songs and " tavern catches."

Every window was open, and from each came the sound of revelry ; in every room shone and glittered the new fittings, and handsome furniture and draperies ;

bright brass and gilding, veined marble, rich woods, and showy stuffs. And the drinking, feasting, crowd gloried in it, for wasn't the splendour in a manner theirs ; and they extolled the man who had so liberally provided ; and then ordered more liquor, and called upon their host, and drank his health with cheers, and swore to stick to him for a jolly fellow as he was ; and went in afresh at the newly-ordered liquor, and wist not how their prudent benefactor had modified it to their present degree of comprehension.

The crowd below—thronging and overrunning the lower premises and the road in front—was of a motley kind. Stout farmers and cattle dealers, who had stopped for their refreshment, and who in all probability would soon form part of the upstairs customers ; factory hands from a distant town 'playing' that week ; the wives and families of the men who has been engaged in the building ; labourers, sailors, beggars, non-descripts, rabble of every size and age.

They came and went, drank, ate, sang, danced, talked, shouted ; told of the wonders achieved in the building of the house ; related stories of the proprietor, in which he rivalled his namesake of "Admirable" memory, and invariably terminating with—

"Eh, he must mak' a sight o' money!"—

"My word but he must so!"—

"Time was when he hadna' a shoe to's foot!"—

"Eh, he's a clever man ; he is so!"—

And then, by way of homage, a fresh sacrifice at the shrine of this true worshipper of the almighty currency.

How the pleasant symphony rang, and chinked, and glided through all that day's labour. How little the

man felt the toil ; and it was toil. Here and there, up and down ; Richard seemed positively ubiquitous : the two maids and his man seriously inclined to that belief before the day was over. They were faint and well-nigh knocked up, old hands as they were ; while he was fresh and active as ever. How could he tire, with that blessed music in his ears ? Impossible !

As the afternoon closed in, the crowd increased, and the noise and revelry grew louder ; but still orderly,—Richard was an adept in that : his houses were rarely the scene of a disturbance ; and in such a case, as we have seen, he knew how to select his victims.

The musicians, plied with drink, redoubled their efforts ; the singing and the dancing, the game and gossip, grew “fast and furious,” and still quietly fell the snow.

Till the sun set ; then—as he put aside his fleecy canopy, to take his parting of the earth—the shower was stayed, and for a brief time his wan smile rested on her chilled bosom.

And on the brow of a stout handsome man, now reaching the summit of the hill. He came opposite the new public-house. What a contrast to the same spot, when the cart, on its way to Birdiethorn, stopped at old “Piert’s Rest ;” and the children drank their draught of milk from the hands of good Dame Maberly !

The noise ; the crowd ; the gas-lights beginning to glitter through the house ; the merriment that burst from all sides, even the gallery on the roof—whence was a magnificent view of the sea and the country for miles round ; the turbulence beginning to make itself apparent ; it might have roused the ancient genius of

the place—to seek in vain the old elm, the horse-trough, the dove-cot, and the thatched roof of his "Rest."

Where the creaking sign had so long hung, now blazed, in golden Brobdignagian type, "The Crichton ;" and for the dove-cooing, and the old elm's rustle, chinked the pleasant symphony.

It was hardly a change to exult in ; yet the man, as he stood opposite, at some distance, folded his arms, and looked proudly, as who should say—"My hand is in this, it is *my* work they rejoice over, and it is well done——"

There was a loud shout from one part of the crowd, and the next minute the man was the centre of a group, chiefly of the workmen, among whom he had made himself popular. His name was buzzed from mouth to mouth, and no denial would be taken ; he must and should come and drink with them, that night of all others.

Mr. Crichton hurried past as they entered the house, and offered his hand to Steyne, with a welcome which the other received very coldly ; for a serious difference between Steyne and his employer had closed the contract.

But there was no helping it, he said, as he suffered himself to be pressed and persuaded ; and soon he made one of a jovial group in the large room above ; his vanity flattered by knowing that all the eyes in the room were directed towards him with interest and admiration of his skill, so clearly made evident.

The liquor was passing freely round, and one rivalled the other in their profuse liberality to the great man of the evening. Songs were sung ; and, in an interval while the musicians were refreshing themselves, and

there was a lull in the music, George suddenly astonished them by sitting down before a piano, and accompanying himself in a rattling patter-song which had once made him famous in the times that were gone. They crowded round him ; from the other rooms they came to listen ; it wanted but this to complete his triumph. They swore that not a drop should he pay for, that night : and Crichton, discovering a treasure in the newly-found attraction, insisted on his partaking of the supper which, on a grand scale, was to celebrate the opening of the new house ; and at which only the very best of his customers would be eligible, by its cost, to assist.

Two hours ago Steyne would have scorned the idea, for he knew he had been hardly used by Crichton ; but drink feeds vanity, and turns it to a man's hurt, as fast as many more evil passions, and Steyne never could resist being the lion of the hour.

Memory once aroused, supplied him with a host of suitable materials. Song, recitation, jest and joke, succeeded : the glass at his elbow never stood empty ; the circle of his listeners increased.

Supper was announced ; Mr. Steyne must take the head of the table. How gaily flowed the conversation ; he was in his element now ! So justly too ; for to him fell the glory of this fine new building ; and in his exultation he felt this to be but the first of many and many such triumphs. There was choice liquor that night too, and those who could appreciate it, and each gave his experience and taste in such matters ; and as they warmed in their conviviality, songs were sung, a shade less strictly nice than before supper. George had made up his mind to leave immediately after ; but

soft voices were begging for their favourite song, and hearty ones were pressing him, actually as a favour, to assist them in disposing of what they had paid for. Was it to be expected he could resist : this the opening day too ?

So they kept it up.—What the *it* meant being difficult of definition : not the sense certainly, nor the wit, nor the morality, or even decency. But all agreed when they parted—that is, such as were still capable of agreeing to anything—that they had had a glorious night ; and that “ R. C. was a brick, and so was “ that other fellow, the bricklayer, or what-you-call—.” And Steyne went home, swelling with gratified vanity and importance, at three in the morning, to a clear fire, a pale sad face, and a supper which he had promised to return to after a turn in the road.

Such contrasts are enough to sour the temper of any man, as all ‘jovial’ and ‘jolly’ fellows will agree ; and may excuse Steyne’s gloomy manner of greeting his wife ; and after muttering something about “ a little business kept him,” expressing a wish to go to bed immediately.

It seemed as if, after all, “ The Crichton ” was not to prove the step in the fortunes of its architect which he had anticipated. True, it had gained him fame, and we have seen how that was likely to benefit him. But it was finished, and the present moment of its owner’s triumph saw the architect without a penny in his pocket ; without employment ; without prospect of any.

The hard weather had brought out-door labour to a standstill. Building still went briskly on, but it was all inside work ; and there were considerably more

hands than employment. Superior workmen had been engaged from the neighbouring town, who, if not equal to Steyne, at least supplied his place sufficiently ; and could he have obtained employment, it must have been at something quite below his late occupation ; but of this he would not even entertain the idea. Honest Crump more than once offered his advice, and hinted that his good word should not be wanting. "Half a loaf, you know, better than none, eh?" But Steyne silenced him at once ; requesting him to mention nothing of the sort before his wife, or he should get no peace of his life, and he was not going to let himself down to that yet.

"Queer too!" soliloquized Crump, when they parted. "One might fancy she'd most cause to be proud, and yet here she was talking to me about doing sewing, or such-like : he talks o' 'letting down,' and yet he can sit and drink wi' that good-for-naught Tom Hinton. Eh, but it's a queer world!"

Harriette's good management prevented any unpleasant strait being felt for some time. The Christmas quarter was paid, to George's amazement : he had trembled as it drew near, though he wanted courage to enquire. Had his extra earnings been from the first committed to the same careful custody, the spring might have returned ere they felt the dread pinch of 'out of work ;' but, the first step, (we all know about that) and every week made it less easy to give it up ; it came so handy, and his anticipations were so bright, that he considered it no wrong to keep it back : and by and by even that fell short of meeting all his little expenses ; and Crichton was so obliging in pressing him not to trouble himself about

payment, that at last he found himself a long score in arrears, and all his private purse vanished into the bargain. Still he flattered himself that, when all came to be squared up, Crichton would make him a present of the score, over and above. But Steyne knew little of the school which had formed his friend ; and calculated with that small appreciation of the sublime worth of the circulating omnipotence, peculiar to those whose acquaintance with it has been but limited.

When accounts were settled, and a considerable balance, after all possible filing-down and pinching-in, remained due to Steyne, the prudent employer had prepared an exact calculation, shewing that George was, in fact, indebted to him the whole of the sum, with the exception of a few shillings.

Steyne's long-smouldering indignation and contempt broke forth : but anger and scorn were alike wasted on the imperturbable Richard ; and it was only by the dread of the effect which George's influence might have among his customers, that he consented to return him a small sum, and to let the rest of the score "stand over," with the addition of a trifling consideration for the "time."

So, discomfited and self-reproachful, George Steyne came out of his grand job ; one in which, however unworthily exerted, he had shown a skill and taste of no common order.

The fracas between him and his quondam employer promised to be so far serviceable, that he made a fervent resolve never to enter his doors again ; for, besides his soreness at his disappointment, he felt certain misgivings concerning the amount of a score of which he had never dreamed of taking account.

Who would doubt a man like Mr. Crichton!—So respectable, *for a publican*—as some of his admirers unwittingly said.

“No!—George had resolved—he would never go near the fellow’s place again. If he could pay him, he would; and if he couldn’t, why he might go without.

We have seen how it turned out.

“I did hope he had given it up,” thought Harriette—“he has been so much better of late. But, thank Heaven, he has done with that man now, and will not be so tempted.”

“Egad! that will be a new draw!” muttered Richard. “Thank God, the fellow’s likely to be useful!—clever too, in his way!”

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

RICHARD HIMSELF.—CHESS.

"As at the tramp of a horse's hoof on the turf of the prairies,
Far in advance are closed the leaves of the shrinking mimosa ;
So, at the hoof-beats of Fate, with sad forebodings of evil,
Shrinks and closes the heart, ere the stroke of doom has attained
it."

LONGFELLOW.

SUMMER has come again—Midsummer—Quarter-day—and the genteel residences and snug villas, which this day twelvemonth existed only in the brain of the architect, are tenanted by fashionable mammas and well-to-do papas, and their hopefuls ; and dashing beauties triumphantly date from a place of whose obscure existence they were profoundly ignorant twenty months ago.

No lack of work now. All hurry and striving—competition and money-turning. From the Chevalier d'Industrie (our dear cousins over the Channel put us to the blush with their refinement—how much less blunt and coarse than our literal 'pickpocket!') imported from Regent Street, to Pier's Promenade—to the artist commissioned by illustrated contemporaries to depict its sands and cliffs and "uglied" beauties ; or "our special," located to immortalize its geographical and historical peculiarities—all were full of business and intent in sweet little Stillhaven.

The small world bathed, walked, and rode, ate, drank, talked, sang, laughed, wept, flirted, courted, coquetted, betrothed, encouraged, slighted, gave cuts direct, and glances alluring—all according to the mode of such-and-such a year. With which—the small world and its mode—you and I have nothing to do, just now; inasmuch as the scene in which we are more nearly concerned is of the world, as old, and of all its modes, and years; in time past and present of civilization.

For in no times of civilization have there been wanting men who were fools, and men to befool them; and the tale of the worshipped golden calf is old as that of the perversion of God's good gifts to His creatures' ruin.

Be sure "The Crichton" was not idle in these thriving seasons. Be sure that its master, maids, and men, strove and bustled, and panted, puffed, and perspired with the best (Truth will out, and the fact may be less objectionable in allusion to the fair syrens of the liquor-bar, than the sand-bar, though it doubtless applied to both equally); for it was a hot summer—terrifically hot!—Dog-days convey but a feeble idea of the degree of warmth. Jackal- or wolf-days they must have been, when the one idea that presented itself to an intelligent mind was that of sporting in the cool green waves, attended by a bevy of ice-bearing mermaids. As to disrobing one's flesh, and "sitting in one's bones"—the very idea, at such a time, is productive of unpleasant reminiscences of careless cooking, singed joints, and black looks thereon consequent.

Black looks, miserable dejected looks, enough, meet

us, as we look in upon "The Crichton," this holiday quarter-day.

Altered and worn as he is, we recognize handsome George Steyne. And opposite him the cool (yes positively, at that moment, cool) countenance of Richard Crichton.

Did you, reader, ever see that grand embodiment of a grander conception—"Satan Playing at Chess with Man for his Soul?" If you have, you may imagine something of the relative air and aspect of our *persona*. Only do not for a moment imagine anything appertaining to our Manchester-derived liquor-seller, in the sublime incarnation of Retzch's fiend beauty. But the desponding reflective sadness of the downcast man—the keen, watchful, waiting calmness of the liquor-seller, are wonderfully there typified; only that, in lieu of the chess-board, between them stand a bottle and glasses.

Not *the* bottle of particular—by no means—times are changed; and, perhaps, were we inquisitive enough, we might find that little item added to a certain score.

"It seems very hard in you," said Steyne, sadly, lifting his head. "You have known me so long."

"So have you known me, Mr. Steyne; and therefore I only wonder you should expect any other than plain, straightforward, business-like dealing, as between man and man."

"You know how regularly I have always paid you."

"Of course; and you will again, no doubt; and your things will be safe enough."

"At such interest you might be content, without the bill of sale, surely."

"Not at all; the interest is no hold upon you."

"Hold upon me! Am I likely, with an ailing wife and young family, to start off at a moment's warning?"

"No: therefore, since you are so secure in your intention of payment, your things will be all right—don't you see that, Steyne? It is but doing things business-like and straightforward."

"Such a dread to have hanging over one," murmured George. "If she were to know——"

"You do not let her know everything; but you are not obliged to take it, you know. I have told you my terms; I would not do it for my own father, if he were alive, at less; and you may take it or leave it, as you please."

Having said which, he was up, and into the bar, at the call of a customer.

Leaving Man alone with his thoughts; not the most pleasant company, at all times; least of all when, tamper or cozen them as you may, they persist in offering evidence only of your folly and error.

"It won't do to go empty-handed, that's certain—a pretty warning of what I might expect in poor Dickey Glossop the other day; cleaned out stock and stone—and this our second quarter; and she doesn't know but the other is paid. There's nothing else to be done, that I can see. The interest is awful! but then I shall manage to keep that paid, somehow; and at any rate it will save the things, and prevent her knowing: and they would be sure to take all now,

which he could but do if things came to the worst."

Men invariably shut their eyes at this stage of prospective possibilities: and so did Steyne. He had just finished his reflections, and the liquor, when the other returned; and the bargain was concluded, apparently more to the satisfaction of the obligee than the obliged; and Steyne hurried away to pay his last quarter's rent, with the money he had just borrowed, at high interest, and on a bill of sale upon his household goods, of Richard Crichton.

George could have found no difficulty now in procuring work, and plenty of it; but he rejected one offer after another, as beneath his deserts; and, meanwhile, was making for himself a fame and a name in the singing-room at "The Crichton:" of which, in the space of a few weeks, he became quite the attraction; and Richard Crichton, estimating to the full the advantages of his talent in drawing custom, offered to "make it worth his while, when he had an evening to spare."

But it harmonized so well with his disposition to be made the lion anywhere, that long ere winter and its "spare" evenings were passed, George had learned to prefer it to any second-rate work; and he had displeased too deeply those who knew his capabilities, to hope for any other.

Added to which, a low lingering complaint had taken hold upon him, induced chiefly by the constant exposure during his contract for the tavern; and increased by his evil habit of tippling. He felt unable to work, unequal to exertion of any kind, even of reasoning, or listening to reason, even of contemplating

the ruin his own vice was working at home ; and he did the best thing a selfish man can hit upon, under such circumstances—he kept away, as much as possible, from the annoying spectacle.

Little of what he received found its way home. How the family had lived through the backward, bitter spring, it would have puzzled them to say. They had not borrowed, nor begged, nor run in debt : and none but the eyes that loved them would have noted the absence, here and there, of some treasured ornament, some valued book, or smaller article of domestic luxury and convenience, prized since the wedding-day.

But they had lived, and the Lady-day rent had been made up, and Steyne had volunteered to pay it ; and Harriette, only too glad to see him interest himself in something of home affairs, had consigned the precious board to him.

But she did not know how deeply he was in debt to Crichton, nor how that thrifty housekeeper and publican had pressed for payment, till he was almost ashamed to go into the house of an evening : or she would not, perhaps, have thought it wonderful that George should have resolved to let the rent ‘stand over,’ in the shadowy hope that something might ‘turn up :’ and the sum, that she had half-starved herself to scrape together, went to fill up a chink in the strong box of the ‘straightforward’ man—likely enough a portion to be consecrated in his pious gift on the following Communion Sunday.

Now Midsummer was come, another quarter was due ; and the weak man was at his wits’ end.

Harriette had been indisposed for some weeks past ;

the domestic machine was totally disorganized ; and George felt the bitterness of real remorse, as he set himself, in sheer desperation, to appeal to his employer for a loan to remove present difficulties.

How he succeeded you have seen. Not much more promising was his interview with the agent, who, with the perversity common to human nature, dwelt more upon the failure of the present dues, than the very welcome certainty of the sum he had just received ; and with some difficulty Steyne got promise of " time."

He was at home that evening much before his usual hour, and found his little son preparing supper for him : vegetables from the garden had for some time formed the food of both sick and well.

" Here, Philip, cook that for mother," he said, putting on the table some trifle he had brought in ; " and I'll go and see if she can come down to supper."

" Will they wait, George ?" was the first anxious inquiry of the sick woman, as he came to the side of the bed where she lay, little Rose sleeping by her.

" Yes, Harriette, dear ; he was quite willing to wait, we have always paid him so well ; and I have a little money, and have brought you something will do you good. Do try and come down to supper with us."

She looked up in his face eagerly ; the kind tone was unusual now. He stooped down and kissed her, and then the child ; and as the woman raised herself by his arm, and he assisted her, leaning her head upon his breast, she began to cry. It was so blessed to lean upon him for support, ever so briefly, and she was so weak and weary.

She came down, and sat among them, with smiles

on her kind pale face. Little Rose, too, was brought down, and did ample justice to "My Phil's" cooking, as they all did, except the mother; who made but a pretence of enjoying the dainty George had brought her.

Yet she was better, much better, she said; but her still-hoping heart was so full. This might be the turning-point of their unhappiness. He was so kind; of course he loved her—how could she ever doubt it!—and, loving her and them, would he neglect them, and see them want?—was it likely?

Not if human nature were anything but human—if it were not filled with inconsistencies, which laugh all rule to scorn, and mock at its own shrewdest calculations.

"I am so much better, dear George; and now they will give us time, and do not doubt us, I feel new spirits to go on. Thank you, love, for taking all the trouble on yourself—God bless you!" And the woman laid her head on the pillow beside him, with a feeling of trust and thankfulness. "He has been ill and weak, I know," she thought—"I knew he must be himself some time. I knew I could not be quite mistaken in my dear husband."

Oh! belief so hard to break!—oh! trust so rudely shaken, yet relied on!—oh! dreams so foolish, yet so fond!—that even shattered and o'erthrown, we still cling to its fragments, and treasure them as a reality which once has been; not as the pure fabric of our own imagination!

So poor Crump, escaping from his fretful, complaining, vain, and ill-tempered wife, shakes his head,

wondering what has come to Sarah of late years. "She's as different to when I married her—eh! then, indeed—"

Then, indeed, friend Crump, you knew your "angel" to have a very decided temper of her own, and a superabundant love of smart ribbons and beads. But the "spirit" and "taste" of the "angel" are "nagging" and "extravagance" in the wife, &c., &c., and *vice versa*, to the end of the piece.

And our weaknesses, vanities, follies, vices, not sufficing to weigh us quite down in the slough; we have forged, look you, a grand all-adapting monstrosity, which lays hold, with equal tenacity, upon even the very smallest, and moulds out of such different materials the same form of the devil's aptest device—a drunkard.

The next night, at the very same hour, George Steyne made the centre of an admiring group, whom he was delighting with the exercise of his powers; and when I say that his audience appreciated, and encored, and were just so far rational as to comprehend what was sung, I have said enough, to give you an idea of the matter, which was furnished for their approval.

And so occupied, for a while we leave him. You would hardly thank me for inflicting upon you the detail of his gradual descent from bad to worse. It would be neither amusing, nor (unfortunately) novel.

The facile declivity of the path on which we have seen him is too well known; and of all characters I take that of Steyne's to be the one least liable to retrace its slippery surface. In the obstinate, rude, outspeaking man—ruffian though he be—there is a

hardness of resolve, a spirit of undaunted determination, which—once set him face upwards—will serve, as the spiked shoe of the chamois hunter, to defy all the glaciers and chasms of temptation and sophistry. But your irresolute and vain man—void of brutality or evil intent as he may be—to him the almost certain woe of the *facili descensu*.

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

SOME OF EVE'S FAMILY.

"I thank Heaven I am not a woman, to be touched with so many giddy offences as he hath generally taxed their whole sex withal.
—SHAKESPEARE.

"The wistful mother, anxious for her race,
Prays Heaven to grant the blessing of—a face;
Yet Vane could tell what ills from Beauty spring,
And Sedley cursed the form that pleased a king."
POPE.

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever!"—KEATS.

"They talks o' Woman this, and Woman t'other; but I take it she's like the rest of us—human natur! And natur will be natur, after all."—*Not* SAM SLICK.

"I CAN'T bear so much as to think about it. You that hasn't been used to nothing of the kind, as a body might see with half an eye; and you're noway well altogether neither, ma'am; excuse me saying so."

Harriette Steyne made but a poor attempt at a smile; and as good Crump was proceeding in his animated protest, she laid her hand upon his arm. "My good friend, she said gently, "I am sure you wish us well, you have always been kind to the children, that is why I asked you—there is no help for it; it *must* be. Will you be so kind as to do this for me?"

"Eh Mrs. Steyne! God bless you and the young ones too!—Do it? why for sure I will, and as much again, and twenty times; only it goes to my heart

with them little white fingers of your'n, stitched over as they be a'ready—to think of you washing great, heavy, coarse men's shirts, and such-like."

"Never mind that, Mr. Crump: the sewing was better while I could get it; but the families are all leaving now you see for the winter, and there is nothing to do; and the washing I think will pay as well, if I can do it."

"Eh! do it! and wi' that cough, and you forced to sit down every minute again! Eh do, there's a dear lady, rest you a-bit, and let things take their own way, then they'll mend for sure."

"I have said that too long, Mr. Crump; but, thank you for your kindness, you will speak to them, then?"

"Aye, will I, and bring it to you too, though I shall hate myself for it. But if you will, why you will, I'm thinking; it's the way wi' you women. But they shan't know, none of 'em; trust me, I'll blind 'em."

Mrs. Steyne smiled; and as he repeated his promise in taking leave, she sighed and said half to herself—"If there was nothing worse than that to know, it would not trouble me."

In a few minutes little Rose came jumping in, with—"Oh, mother see what dear dood Mr. Crump dave me!—see, mother, so much!"

Half-a-crown was a large sum to the children then.

Tears came into the poor mother's eyes, and Philip, taking Rose aside, held whispered council with her, which resulted in the child coming to her mother, saying, "Mother dear, I'll div you this for to det some tea, and may I have just a penny for some new beads ut my Phil knows where to det?"

Good Crump's liberality furnished the poor family

with a meal that night; procured, too, the necessary materials for the brave woman to commence her repulsive labours on the following morning; when her good friend reluctantly brought her an armful of linen, disguised in shavings, from the single young men under him at the works; which, on the assurance of superior finish, and at a trifle below the usual charge, he had prevailed on them to commit to him.

"They'll be wanting to know next who it be for," he muttered to himself, "and I'm a bad hand at a lie. It'll go about that we're hard up, and that Sarah's took to laundry-work. Darned if *I* care! and upon my soul I'd a'most sooner it was her than this one. To see how she thanked me, and her eyes shone, just as it might ha' been a present I'd give her. My word I ha' got less thanks for many a present! Eh, what a wife for a man! And there's that brute yonder—I'd fain knock the life out of him—I could so! Now if my Sarah had been like her——"

But, as if conscious he was on dangerous ground, Crump reined in the flying courser of his thought, and relieved his mind on the score of Sarah's shortcomings, by chastising one of her offspring, whom he encountered stoning a frog in a ditch, and sending him home to his mother; who thereon founded a discourse of half an hour's duration, with which she edified her gossip, Mrs. Darby, on the fruitful theme of men's 'tantrums,' and evil-doing in general, and her husband's in particular.

Meanwhile, father being gone, as most generally fell out, for the day, copper-fire was lighted, tubs prepared, water fetched from the spring, and the woman began her self-imposed task.

All the day long she toiled ; little Philip ever her right hand—seeing before she asked ; bringing, long required all she could need. He gathered the vegetables, and prepared them ; he went to the village, and invested most cleverly their remaining threepence in meat, running all the way there and back, and resisting all Rose's entreaties—the hardest thing for Phil to do—because they would be so long, and mother would want him.

So the wilful beauty sat in the porch, crying and slapping her tiny knees in despair, till he returned, when her affections were divided between " My Phil," and the string of brilliants he brought her.

The house was swept up, the dinner cooked, the fractious little face washed, and the curly air restored to order, before the good lad thought of sitting down to the society of his beloved Scipio, Curtius, and such ancient worthies of his heart. Even then his attention was not unfrequently claimed for the purpose of hearing Rose say her letters, a task of which he acquitted himself with infinite good grace.

In fact, Philip's not least arduous duties lay in amusing and caring for little Rose. The child, so long accustomed to petting and notice, felt neglected, the sense of trouble in the house oppressed her, and she was not unfrequently wayward and petulant to a degree. But her brother never wearied ; the little fairy seemed the sunshine of the rough boy's existence ; it was as natural for him to yield and comfort, as for the tiny woman to exact and complain.

" Mother's so tired, Rosey," said Philip, as the child scrambled into her lap, after dinner was over. " Come and sit on Phil's knee, there's a darling."

"I want my father, I do," said Rose: "he never comes home now to him's dinner, never."

Philip lifted her to his knee, and coaxed her attention; while the mother wiped the moisture from her pale face, and in a few minutes resumed her laborious task.

Through that day steadily, till the time at which her husband usually returned, when all was carefully put aside, and she and home ready to receive him.

For he seldom was beyond midnight, and when there was any supper in the house he shared it with her; sometimes contributing a portion, and at the week's end a small sum generally found its way home, sufficient, perhaps, to provide a dinner for the next day.

He was not boisterous or noisy in his drink; with all his faults he had never ill-treated her or the children more than by neglect, in his worst fits his hand had never been raised against them. He had always a smile and caress, in his maudlin degeneracy, for his pretty Rose. Philip he rarely noticed, though the boy abated nothing of his attention and respectful care. None could know what his young heart suffered, or how, as day by day he saw his mother grow paler and more sad, he devised fresh plans for his father's redemption; at times silently acting them out, and seeing them failing in succession.

"Oh, I do want my father!" sighed little Rose, one evening, when the children had rambled to the beach, hand in hand, watching the sunset.

"I wish he'd come home, like he used to, Rosey. Wasn't it nice then of evenings?"

"Yes, it was; and it's so bad now!" answered the little one.

"It's like Brown Street again," sighed Philip: "but you can't remember that, Rosey."

"My Phil, I do hate public-houses; don't you?"

"I wish they was all burnt!" said Phil, energetically.

"Touldn't we doe and ask father to tome home?"

"He wouldn't come for me, Rosey, dear."

"For me! eh, my Phil?—Eh?"—and Rose's bright eyes danced with delight—"if I asked him, would he?"

"Oh, Rose! mother wouldn't have you go into a public-house for the world."

"But her would like father to tome home, Phil, eh? we would be so glad—yes, Phil! yes!"

Pulling his hand, as she spoke, with a force her brother was not disposed to resist, they crossed the lane, passed the old church, and were soon in sight of "The Crichton."

But the little one's courage fell, as she faced the flaunting pile, with its many windows, where the gas-lights were beginning to glitter.

"Loo will tome with me, my Phil?" she said, doubtfully, still holding to his hand.

"Yes, dear; but if father sees me—you know he does not love me like he does you, darling Rosey—he will be angry, and he wont come."

"Father does what I ask, he does," said the little creature, encouraging herself.

"See, Rosey, I'll wait in there, at foot of the stairs, and if any one touches you, you call out. I'll not go without you, you know."

They stood at the side door. All seemed very quiet; but they heard the piano, and their father's voice.

"I will doe," said Rose, resolutely; and Philip, standing at the foot, saw her pass swiftly and noiselessly up the stairs. With a panting heart the little creature, guided by the music, entered the room. There were few in it yet, and she espied her father at once. Running to him, she put her arms round him, and cried out in her excitement.

Astonished, her father ceased playing, and lifted her up.

"Why, Rosey! my pet, who sent you here?" he said.

"I tame 'myself, I did," said the child, bashfully.

"I want loo, I do, my father."

"Come of herself, did she? Bless her heart! she's the only one that cares for her father, she is!" And the man stood his child upon his knee, looking proudly at her, while she caressingly hid her face upon his shoulder.

"Eh! she is a real beauty!" said one.

"Got something of his look, too," said a woman; to which her companion demurred.

"That will be the child that Crump told us of; dances, he said, like a fairy."

"Eh! I would like to see her!"

"Will my pet dance for the lady?"

Her face was hidden in his whiskers, and she whispered—"I want loo, I do; I want loo to tome home with me."

"If my pet will dance for the gentlemen, father will come home."

The pet looked into his face, as seeking a confirmation of his promise, then got down from his knee, and putting back her hair behind her ears, stood ready, as if anxious to conclude her share of the bargain.

The piano sounded ; the little feet began to move, at first slowly and softly, then quicker and quicker ; in the excitement of the dance, the child forgot the place, the company, everything but the delight of her own movements and the sweet music.

The murmur increased ; the doors on either side of the room opened : rough faces looked in ; rough voices exclaimed and admired :—

“ Why, she’s just nothing but a doll !”

“ See her hair ! like gold it is for sure.”

“ Oh, the sweet creature !”

“ You can’t see her feet, they move so quick !”

“ Where’s she come from ?”

“ It’s Steyne’s child.” And so on.

“ Why !” said a huge dark man, rising from a bench in the next room, “ that be the little wench as I nigh scared out of her wits, one night, looking into Steyne’s garden. Eh, it be the same ; a greadly wench, beant her ?”

The person addressed returned no answer, but stood with his hands in his pockets, and cigar in his mouth, apparently intent upon the child’s performance.

A young man he was, his dress neither shabby nor good, though little worn ; it suggested ideas of having been slept in : his hat was set rather on one side, over a profusion of hair, very black, very glossy, and very corkscrew ; his linen and hands had apparently been long oblivious of water, save that of a ring which glittered on his finger—all but his collar, which was painfully stiff and white. The pimply state of his countenance certainly warranted the presumption of a “ crisis,” though it might be doubted whether its nature were that belonging to a strictly hydropathic course.

"Not bad," he repeated to himself; for, perhaps in virtue of his being a guest, *in perpetuo*, of "The Crichton," during the last week, he held aloof from the vulgar herd around him. "Now! where the plague are you shoving to?" (removing the cigar from his lips, and looking down.) "What do you know about dancing, that you break your neck after it, youngster?"

"I want my sister," said the boy he had spoken to, striving to enter between the little crowd.

"Oh you do, *do* you?" said a voice at his elbow; and Mr. Crichton, 'admirable,' and ever on the alert, took him gently by the shoulder. "Now, my little lad, you found your way up those stairs it seems—you'll find your way down as fast as you please. Now run along!"

"Ah! cut it," put in the young man: "public-houses ain't places for good little boys, you know. Run home to your mother."

Philip attempted to resist, but the arm of the determined Richard was about him, and the next minute found him on the outside of the house; which he bitterly bewailed having allowed his little sister to enter.

"Yours, is she?" said he of the corkscrews, lounging up to Steyne. "Where'd she learn that queer dance? Nowhere? Ah! I see; natural genius and all that. Will you do it again, my dear?"

No; Rose had fulfilled her share of the contract, and now claimed her father to redeem his promise, so urgently that they all laughed heartily.

"Here, you beauty; see, here's a lucky sixpence for you, if you'll dance again," said one.

"Aye, and here's a piece of ribbon to hang it round her neck," said one of the women.

"And I'll give her this pretty thing, for a kiss—see!" said another, holding up a shining brooch from her own dress.

The bribe was not to be resisted; the exhibition was repeated, and Richard himself looked on with an approving eye.

He of the ring nodded condescendingly, and patted the child's head; but her father drew her away, and took her on his knee.

"Let her sup," said a man, holding out a glass; but Steyne checked his hand ere it reached her.

"No; she hasn't learned it yet, and she's best without."

"Time enough," laughed he of the corkscrews; "that'll come by and by. Here, *you'll* not say no;" and he held out a glass of liquor he had just ordered, which Steyne took, with more relish than he had his remark.

"She'll have a cake though," added the young man; and he poured several into her lap, from a basket on the table.

Rose gathered them up and began to eat them, while her eyes were fixed upon the giver; attracted, perhaps, by the glitter of his ring, and other small etceteras of jewellery equally conspicuous.

Many and pressing were the offers of drink Steyne received and accepted; his popularity had evidently risen that night; and it was with quite an increase of importance that he prepared to go, despite protestations and entreaties.

It is true it was not a busy night, and was besides

getting late, as Richard Crichton quite obligingly bade him good-night. "And you can bring the little girl with you, Steyne, you know, when you like; she'll be out of harm's way; and my wife is very fond of children,—she might run in to her. Good-night. Good-night poppet. Give me a kiss?—no! Ah well; ta-ta!"

I am afraid, in the glory of her new treasures, Rose had forgotten her brother, till she met him, half-way between the house and "The Crichton," when her exclamation of delight was interrupted by his voice—

Father! mother is so ill; please make haste! And may I go for a doctor? I know where he lives in Stillhaven."

"Yes, yes; run! What ails your mother? There, go, make haste; I'll run on."

And with the child in his arms he did run, fast as ever he had in his life; for his soul chilled at the words.

Leaving Rose below, he hurried upstairs.

She lay on the bed, apparently just recovered from a faint; as Philip had found her, when, fearing his mother might be alarmed, he returned. A glass of water was at her side, which Steyne held to her lips, and, reviving a little, she opened her eyes and looked sadly at him.

"Oh, Harriette dear!" he cried, and took her hand. "What is the matter? You are ill, my poor girl—what shall I do?" And he began to weep over her.

She soothed him, said faintly she should be better soon; but she did not weep, she pitied him. It has been said, "Pity is akin to Love." So nearly kin, as to make their union unpropitious!

In lamenting over his wife, the time passed till Philip returned : the doctor was out, could not possibly be there till morning. But the sufferer herself objected to his having been sent for, saying she was "only weak."

That was all ; only so weak that the mere act of attempting to rise in the morning sent her into a faint. The doctor came, saw at once the state of the case,—exhaustion, prostration, &c. ; and pronounced the usual formula : "strengthening diet, rest, quiet, freedom from anxiety." He might as well have prescribed pounded diamonds, and infusion of pearls.

But if sweet faces and gentle words, if childish love and regret, and untiring service, have any healing virtue, there was a whole pharmacopia at Birdiethorn ; even little Rose seemed to forget her peevish wilfulness, in helping to nurse "dear my mother." As for Philip, he came out so strong in all his various capacities, as even to astonish himself ; while Steyne, who, as the phrase goes, had a good heart, and who had been shocked by his wife's illness, did not fail to bemoan and lament ; and for two days never quitted the house ; though whether to the benefit of the invalid may be doubted. The very small sum he had received that night, under the careful management of the boy furnished them with food, and some better nourishment for the invalid ; but George missed his daily stimulant dreadfully ; on the second evening the appetite was no longer to be withstood : he quitted his wife's sick pillow for "The Crichton," where he met a warm reception, as may be inferred from his not returning till one in the morning. But Harriette was

better; the compulsory rest of body, and perhaps some temporary stimulant in the medicines, for a time recruited her wasted strength.

How Philip received little Rose's recital of her display, while she triumphantly exhibited her treasures, and told of cakes and kisses, we may imagine.

"Oh, Rosey dear! I am so sorry that ever I let you go; but father wouldn't have come for me; and that horrid Mr. Crichton turned me out, and wouldn't let me even come in."

"Did he, my Phil?" kissing and stroking his head.

"But Rosey, darling, please don't wear that ugly brooch."

"Oh it isn't ugly, my Phil!" cried Rose.

"Well, don't wear it, dear; because if mother knew of you being in the public-house, and dancing—oh! it would make her bad. Don't ever you go in again, dear; will you Rosey, please? And don't tell mother till she's quite well."

"I won't tell my mother at all!" cried Rose, with the dawn of her sex's instinct; and going immediately to hide the dear sparkler, where in solitary enjoyment she might gaze upon it, secure from Phil's hostile designs.

Touched by his father's evident concern at his mother's illness, never doubting but that he too would discourage Rose's appearance at the public-house, the boy was not sorry that it should be hidden from her; and resolved that no risk should be incurred of its repetition. How he longed to be able to earn, though it were ever such a trifle; but of that he had no chance: and he was the more reconciled to it that his assistance was needful to his mother at home.

For several nights a trifle brought by Steyne sufficed for their wants, and as soon as poor Harriette was sufficiently restored she once more applied herself to her labour; George as speedily relapsing into his old habits, and becoming every day more irritable and gloomy.

He returned earlier than usual one evening, and walked into the kitchen, where his wife was ironing. "I say, Harriette!—he began, in an angry voice: "when you do take up with this kind of thing, just be so good as to keep it to yourself, will you? *I'm* not going to be pointed at, for the husband of a washerwoman, I can tell you! Sly enough of you too!—you must have had plenty all this while, and never said a word. And that dirty fellow to throw it in my face that you was keeping me, washing his shirts, confound him!"

"George," said his wife, quietly, "will you tell me how we are to live? I had no needlework; I could not leave the children, to go out. We have had food to eat, and there is the rent for last quarter nearly all made up."

"You never told me."

"No, you never asked: but it will be paid; I shall take it next week. I am sorry you have been annoyed about the washing, but it cannot be helped—we must live."

She went on with her work, and he sat down by the fire, still muttering—"A pretty pass to come to! to be told my wife keeps me, washing other men's shirts."

Presently she came, and putting some things to the fire, she stood by him:—"George, wouldn't it be best

to leave this place, altogether?—I believe we should do better in another ; and, as the children are growing up, I might get teaching—”

“ After washing men’s shirts !”

She looked at him, pressed her lips tightly together, and turned to her work.

“ How are we to move, I should like to know ?” he said, abruptly, a minute after—“ what’s to pay our rent, and the rest of it ?”

“ There is nothing else, that I know of—we owe nothing else ; I thought some of the things—”

“ The things mustn’t be touched !—not a stick !—mind that !—”

“ Why George ! what for ?—

“ Never mind ; because they mustn’t.” And he stalked out.”

If the man could have known the pain, actual physical pain, his words cost her : even altered as, by drink, he was, he could hardly have used them. Even then she could have kneeled to him—have entreated, for their children’s sake, to stop, ere it was too late—but that had all been done in past times, it was over now. She pressed her hand to her side, sat down a minute—then went on folding away her work, and calculating how she could possibly manage out of it to get a pair of shoes for little Rose.

She looked at them as they sat—Rose with her beads and flowers, Phil with his dear Ancient History—and said, “ Thank God !”

That they were left her.

Crump came in at dusk, to fetch her parcel, and she regretted to him that her husband had been annoyed.

"Aye, its that Tom Hinton," returned Crump ; " he does love to have a hit at Steyne. But how he found it out beats me ; for I never asked *him*, be sure ; and he could ha' said it but to bother him."

" Serve him right, too !" said the good man to himself : " I'd ha' been on to him before now myself, if it hadn't been for hurting her. Eh, but she looks worse and worse ; he must have a heart, he must ! But there, Crichton has him under's thumb, somehow ; that's certain ! "

That day's receipts made up the rent, put a pair of shoes on the poor little feet which had been all but bare ; but with that task her last strength was expended.

" Philip," she said the next evening, " I must go to bed, my boy ; and if Mr. Crump comes, thank him, but tell him mother can do no more. Mind Rose, dear, and get your tea ; it is in the cupboard."

She would have no one sent for ; she was not ill, she said, " only weak."

Her boy brought her tea and toast ; no hand of experienced cook or nurse could have prepared them better ; it grieved her that she could not take them. Little Rose followed on tiptoe with flowers, her favorite " bue fower ;" and whispered, " my Phil," might she stay ? The sun set, its warm rays filled the room ; twilight fell—little Rose went to bed ; then, after much bidding, Philip said good-night. Midnight came, and still alone the wakeful woman lay. Then came a step, in at the door, up the stairs, and stumbled at the top—

" Hey ! holloa ! what's this ? Why, Philip, boy, what are you doing here ?"

" Oh ! father, had I—oh, I'd fallen asleep. Mother is ill, father, and I thought she'd want me."

"Ill, is she? Well go to bed now, or you'll be the next ill."

He did not enter the room any too softly, but she did not seem to be disturbed.

"Hey! dear me! dear me!" sighed the man, commiserating himself, the object of so many trials. He was soon asleep; and did not awake till Philip and Rose came with mother's breakfast in the morning.

Breakfasts, dinners, and suppers,—where they came from, during the weary time she lay "only weak," it would have puzzled any one to tell who had troubled to think about it. Philip could have told, so could Mr. Crump; of whom the quondam 'angel' about this period waxed suspicious, dealing in broad inuendoes, and to her gossips dilating upon the depth and general depravity of men; more especially such as all at once claimed for themselves the earnings of overhours—pocket money, indeed!"

Once in a while some neighbour would come in to inquire after Mrs. Steyne, to make her bed, or assist in some small matter; but she made so little complaint, and varied so much, that they thought little of her illness, she would soon get round; so said her husband.

One evening Philip sat alone by her bedside—she had been worse the past day or two. "Where is Rose?" she asked—"she was not here last evening; you should not leave her alone, dear."

Philip muttered something about looking for her; he left the room, and went into the garden. He crept in some time after; his mother had dozed, and when she awoke again it was past Rose's bed-time.

The next evening the boy sat with his book upon

the stairs, but he was not reading, when his mother knocked at the bedside.

"Come and sit with me, you and Rose," she said ;
"come, both of you."

Philip came slowly ; his mother asked again where was Rose ?—No answer.

She raised herself, and looked at Philip ; he was crying.

"Philip ! tell me, this instant—where is your sister?"

"Oh, mother ! I couldn't tell you, I couldn't—father has taken her with him."

"Where !—where, child ?"

"To the public-house, mother ; he takes her in the evenings—I couldn't tell you !—oh, mother, *don't !*"

She had stepped out upon the floor, and was hurrying on her things ; she had not left her bed for days ; and she looked so pale and ghastly, that he trembled and cried out, putting his arms about her.

"In a public-house !—a public-house !" —she said, as with inspired strength she hurried down the stairs, and out of the house. Philip ran, crying with terror, but he could not keep up with her. As he gained the brow of the hill, she disappeared within the doors of
"The Crichton."

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

TWILIGHT AND DAWN.—LEVANA AND SILENUS.

“ Our feelings and our thoughts,
Tend ever on, and rest not in the present ;
As drops of rain fall into some dark well,
And from below comes a scarce audible sound.
So fall our thoughts into the dark hereafter,
And their mysterious echo answers us.”

LONGFELLOW.

“ 'Mid leafy glades, where shadows come and go,
So in Life's chequered phantasy,
Quick follow joy and woe.”

ANON.

SHE passed swiftly through the bar, and up the stairs ; almost unseen by the drinkers lounging at the tap : and was in the room above, ere Philip had come up to the outer door.

The music had ceased ; the applause, ringing through the room, covered her abrupt entrance, and she was in their midst before they were aware of her.

Awe-stricken by the sudden apparition of that tall and pallid figure, the voices were hushed in a moment ; they fell back, and the little dancer remained alone, flushed and exultant, her eyes sparkling, and her golden hair all disordered.

Too quickly the mother understood all, and, darting forward, would have caught the child in her arms ; but she, with a cry of terror, sprang to her father's

knee, and clung to him, looking up in affright at the wild and haggard features of her other parent.

With an exclamation of grief, too intense for words, the woman again threw her arms around her; but she struggled, and, bursting into tears, cried, "Father! my father! I won't go with *you*; I will have my father!—"

"He meanwhile sat, in stupified amazement, and offered no interference, till Rose, again freeing herself, darted into his arms.

"I love my father, I will stop along of him! I won't go with you!" she cried, clinging round him; and some of the bystanders, drawing near, separated the miserable mother from them.

"For God's sake let her come!" she cried, clasping her hands; "if you will ruin yourself, at least leave me my child! George! George! have mercy on her and me! My little child, my Rose! come with me, darling!—give her to me—for mercy's sake give her to me!—Don't break my heart quite, George!"

The owner of the ring and corkscrews had, at the beginning of the scene, slipped from the room, and now returned, accompanied by Crichton, who came up to Harriette, and laid his hand softly upon her arm.

"Now, my good lady, no noise here, you know—if you please. A disturbance in my house is a thing I never by any chance allow. What! Mrs. Steyne! I should not have believed it, really—"

"My child!—I *will* have her! You shall not keep her in this horrid place, among you! Give her to me! give her to me, and I will go."

"My dear Ma'am," expostulated blandly he of the corkscrews, "you see the child does not want to

come ; and she's with her father, too ; she's all right, really."

"At any rate," resumed Crichton, "there are times and places to set that right. I'll have no disturbance in my house—it's my rule, and that's enough.—Now ma'am.—"

So, weeping, imploring, calling upon her little child, the unhappy woman was led to the door, and down the stairs, and thrust out into the night, where her young son tremblingly awaited her ; and, taking her cold hand in his, led her home, and to her bed.

How that night went by, and the next day, and many more, let pass. Whatever of suffering there was, made itself little heard. A kind neighbour, knowing Mrs. Steyne was "but poorly," came in, once in a while, always in the day-time, to set things right, and found her son Philip always at her side. Since that night when, home reached, she gathered him in her arms, and cried that her heart was broken, they had never spoken of this last terrible sorrow : though, by every look and word and action, he tried to comfort her, his silence told her too well how little hope there was. Father and daughter came and went, but never entered her sick-room. The evening saw them absent, and they seldom returned till after midnight. She, past all power of expostulation or complaint, lay passive now, and seldom spoke.

* * * * *

It might be ten days after that evening, when Philip stole from the room on tiptoe. He had been reading to her. His dear Ancient History had, of late, been put aside for another—though ancient,

never old, to those privileged, as she, to rely in and to love it.

He thought she slept, and had come softly away, downstairs, as if the trouble of his own thoughts might disturb her.

It had been wet and gusty for days, and the warmth of the sunset was a luxury the poor lad welcomed heartily.

He leaned in the doorway, gazing into the deep blue sky, where the purple, and the gold, and the red fire, were rolling slowly up, like gifts of the generous sun atoning for his departure; and giving earnest of a sure return. Even the boy's sorrow could not make him insensible to the wondrous beauty of such a sight, and he looked at the increasing glories, until his breath was almost hushed, and in the solemn stillness and depth of heaven's mystery he seemed to draw a promise of comfort for himself; tears dropped from his eyes, and he said aloud, "No, she won't die!—oh! she can't."

Even while he gazed, momentarily changed the shifting scena of the skies, a light fleecy cloud flitted up from the sea, and sped like a messenger up the blue arch. At that moment the boy started, shuddered, and his eyes fell from their fixed gaze.

"There it is again!—oh!" his voice trembled, and his hands involuntarily clasped together. "Oh! it's there again! It isn't my fancy—it isn't! How dreadful!"

He put his hands to his ears, and closed his eyes, turning towards the house, yet dreading to enter, while his face was almost convulsed.

Standing so, he had not heard a footstep which, entering by the front door, came rapidly through the

house ; and he started as a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a cheery voice exclaimed, "Why Phil, my boy !—halloa ! what ails the lad !"

"Oh, Mr. Crump !" he said, catching the hand of the good man, "I am so glad you're come. Did you hear it ? Hark ! No, it's gone I think."

"What's gone ? What ails you, boy ?"

"That moaning ; I heard it once before, two nights since ; it comes from underneath ; it's so awful, like a woman crying. Will Darby told me about it long ago ; he said it was a sign of, of—death !" And Philip, with all his struggles to be manly, could not keep back his tears.

"Sign ! nonsense ! my lad ; I thought you'd more sense ! Where's your mother ? How is she ? Where's the sunbeam, sweet little Rosey ?"

Then,—his shadowy fears dissolving before more material griefs,—Philip told his honest friend all that had passed in the last few days, interrupted by many a muttered exclamation from Crump.

"Ah, I guessed how it would be sooner or later,—I am sorry I was away, from my soul I am !" he said, when Philip had concluded. "Now, might one see your mother ? How is she, poor thing ? she says so little about herself—there, come, I must see her."

Philip led the way to the bedside of his mother, where through the open casement the last sunrays still came.

She was awake, and turned her eyes with something of eagerness to them as they entered ; but the gaze faded when she saw who it was ; though she tried to smile, and held out her hand to Crump as he approached.

What he saw in that pale face ; what he read in

those earnest eyes—more shadowy now than ever—in the coming of the great shadow—made him start, even as poor Philip had started, at the warning of his own fears. The words he had upon his lips were never spoken; by an involuntary movement he would have kneeled; but he dropped into a chair at the bedside, and covered his face with the other hand, as if she should not see what it might tell.

"I know," she said in a weak voice; "I know, my good friend—I am thankful you are here. No one else I would have been so glad to see. God bless you, friend; you have been kind."

Then her voice failed; but presently she spoke again, said "it was long since she had seen *him*, yet did not say she would have seen him now—she would have been glad to live too, if she might—her boy, her good Philip—and with her hands she took his tearful face, and pressed it to her own; but God knew best, and she was so weary—"weary" she said again, "*so* weary." Then she was silent, with her eyes fixed upon the glory fading from out the sky.

Poor Crump, wiping his face again and again—uselessly always—hurried from the room, and beckoned Philip to follow him.

"Your mother's very ill—you should have had a doctor. There, there, don't cry—you didn't know—what's she eat?—oh, you have money?"

"That is what my father left; but I wouldn't use it; I couldn't—it's what they give poor Rosey; I couldn't. Mother's had all she could eat; they were very good at the farm, and sent her eggs and milk."

"Eh, and you've been starving and frightening yourself to a shadow. There, there, it's only the sea rising,

gales coming on, my lad ;" and while he spoke the good man with some difficulty repressed a shudder, as a low plaintive moan sighed up at their feet, ran through the cottage, and died away.

Philip turned pale.

"It's but a storm brewing, my lad—you mustn't be afraid. I'll come back soon, and bring your father. Go and sit with her. Bless you; no harm'll come to you, near her." So saying he left the house.

"She'll not get over the night, I'm afraid," he said, as he hurried away. "The fools of women is so shy of the place, they'd none of 'em stop there a night for love nor money. Eh! what the world's coming to I don't know—to leave such a woman as that! But I'll see whether there's no feeling left in him at all."

And alternately execrating and lamenting, he took the direction of "The Crichton," as fast as his feet would carry him.

Philip returned to the room; and after vainly offering to his mother the various nourishment she had been in the habit of taking, he stood by her side, and leaned his head upon the pillow.

The sunset had faded, more fleecy clouds came up from the horizon, twilight crept on; the flowers began to pour out their perfume to the night; in the bushes below the russet bird meditated her evening chant. So still and solemn it was! He longed, yet feared, to speak to her, her breathing was so calm, perhaps she slept.

"Philip, dear," she said slowly, "is he gone?"

"Yes, mother; he will bring my father, he says, directly. Are you better, mother dear?"

"Put your head here, my boy—kiss me—you must

bid your mother good-bye, dear Philip; I shall suffer no more, my boy—I shall be better soon for ever.”

Half-terrified, awe-stricken at the strangely altered yet familiar voice, the solemn words, the fast increasing gloom, the boy clung closer to her, and, sobbing, calling her by every endearing name, entreated her not to leave him—as though it depended but on her will.

Holding him, straining him with all her feeble strength to the slowly-beating heart, as if she would fain have taken him with her, the mother soothed him, and the boy, always mindful of her, struggled to be calm.

“You know, my boy, I would not leave you, if I might stay to be with you, and to take care of you. But my Philip will not forget his mother, and all we have read and talked about together. My son will be a good and honourable man, and love the truth above all, I know he will.”

There was a long silence; then she spoke again, but so feebly that the boy's beating heart was louder than her words.

“Poor George”—“dear Rose”—“my little child”—“so weary”—“oh, *so weary!*”

Closer he clung to her beloved breast; nearer, with all her failing strength, she strained him to her, and his tears fell warm upon her chilled cheek.

The russet bird piped mournfully below, and out from the darkening casement went a pitiful cry—
“Mother! mother, dear mother, speak to me again!”

* * * * *

In this world—humanly warped and perverted as it is—smiles and tears are so closely allied, that I may,

perhaps, be pardoned for bringing them in contact here.

According to his school, might the philosopher have been moved to either, in witnessing the unusual orgies celebrating at "The Crichton" this night, and the occasion.

If to Silenus had been born a son and heir,—if an infant Bacchus or Bacchante had made glad the hearts of expectant parents,—quite in keeping had been the alcoholic demonstration which had literally shaken the walls of that magnificent hostelry all day, and which actually seemed to gain fresh vigour with the blaze of gas that, long before nightfall, set darkness at defiance,

If, instead of the softest, fairest little marvel of quietness and good conduct that ever adorned the annals of babyhood, it had been the roundest, lustiest, ruddiest, slyest specimen of the genus satyr; that ever vine debased hath crowned, or ivied thyrsus graced; come to add a dignity to the name of Crichton, less suggestive might this scene have been of a pagan saturnalia over a hapless human sacrifice; less lamb-and-wolf-like the contrast in the laughing blue-eyed infant, basking in a far-off region of down and fleece, and the riotous rollicking throng doing honour to its felicitous advent.

Richard Crichton was a father, and held open house on the occasion—that is to say, to a certain extent,—and, as he to himself would express it, "lost nothing by the bargain." Few men understood better the great secret of furnishing an occasion to be "jolly." There is something wonderful in the avidity with which folks will seize upon an excuse to get drunk. When "heat," and "cold," and "low spirits," and "good spirits" and "bad times," and "good times," are all exhausted,

it is a distinguishing mark of your true genius, in that way, to hit upon a sound excuse for getting reasonably intoxicated.

And if this present were not a good and sufficient, what might be? Landlord's wife had got a baby, and report said an extraordinarily fine one; though we may safely presume it had not six toes or duplicate thumbs, or the admirable Richard had never let slip so valuable an opportunity.

However, baby cooed above-stairs, and its pretty mother looked prettier (so folks say) while receiving all sorts of congratulations, faithful or feigned, as may be; and the drink was dispensed and jokes were cracked below-stairs, and the gossip ventured incursive and excursive flights on the subjects of the Crichtons—their birth, parentage, &c., &c. And for so much given, much more was bought; and for those who came and went, many, many more stayed—and the baby child smiled and slept, happily unconscious of the broken heads and promises, the wasted time and money, the sins of omission and commission, for which its little terrestrial excursion had made it in some sort answerable.

Oh, baby Crichton!—if you could indeed see, this night, how your future is to be linked in with what now is passing! But there, if you or any other baby could, it might spoil the interest of the whole story; so rest as you are.

“Some goes up, and some comes down,” as one of the gossips is saying, the glass at her lips carrying out one part of the illustration, the gin very effectively performing the rest, in a double sense, no doubt. At the piano, in this long room of blazing light, cut glass,

and gilded ornament, sits our unstable friend Steyne; and of a surety his has not been the process of ascension, since last we saw him. His coat so perfectly threadbare; his hat, beneath the instrument, so napless; his faded cheek, limp hair, and hollow eye; are an advertisement for "R. C.'s finest London gin;" though not, perhaps, such a one as he cares to read. His linen so well patched, so white; his buttons so firm and complete; are witness of something else; but it boots not to speak of that—the fingers that have done it are chilling now—at the purchase of his soul's salvation they could work for him no more.

But he does not know it, remember; he only knows she is sick, worn, grief-struck, "fanciful," he says—and he knows they must have money; "so its no use talking."

He has just said so, in answer to a young man, who, passing his be-ringed fingers through his luxuriant hair, asks him how his wife takes it? It is a miserable attempt at a laugh, which makes sickly George's features; but the other laughs out, and repeats the words, with some addition, to another at his side, who must have been "going up" surely, since last we saw him, if, in the new slop attire, the clean face, and flashy handkerchief, we do recognize our sometime acquaintance, poor Cary Hinton's husband, Tom. He looks handsome, too, bull-dog style; and he is on exceedingly good terms with the owner of the corkscrews.

"That's about it with all of us, I expect, eh?"—says the latter—"we must have money, so we must."

Meanwhile Steyne, rising from the piano, entered a small closet, or ante-room, and in a few minutes re-

turned, leading by the hand his child, who, even in that impure throng, that meretricious glare and glitter, seemed to have gained new loveliness.

Her dress is much the same as when I showed her to you in the garden, except that the flowers in her hair are artificial, and some few additions have been made by the females of the house.

A murmur runs round the room, as she enters ; but the tiny creature seems well-accustomed, and does not falter now. A few preliminary chords are struck, and then the exhibition begins.

At first, calm, graceful in all her movements ; some new charm improvised, some pretty turn given ; gradually increasing in speed with the music, till her little feet seem to twinkle in the air, and herself to be multiplied by the rapidity of her movements.

No longer able to repress their admiration, the walls re-echo to their boisterous applause ; the little performer, stimulated to fresh exertion, achieves new prodigies.

At that moment the door flies open, and, dashing through the crowd, overturning all in his way, a man rushes up to him at the instrument, and seizing his arm, utters some words, almost unintelligible, from his haste.

The player's hands drop : he starts up—"Dying!" he cries, wildly—"dying!"

"She can't live the night through—I saw her just now," says the other.

"My God! oh, my wife!" cried the miserable Steyne. Rushing from the room, bare-headed, he gained the street, and ran like a madman down the hill.

The company, dismayed, arose, exclaimed, ques-

tioned, answered, wondered—understanding nothing. The poor child stood terrified, looking from one to another, and Crump was crossing the room to her, when a voice fell on his ear, that made him turn, with an involuntary quake, to the door.

“ I knew he was here ! I said so, Mrs. Darby ! and if this is the way one’s to be treated, after slaving and toiling eleven years for him and his children, as I’ve done—I think it’s hard ; it is so. Here be the first day as he’s home to me for seven weeks, and him no sooner set foot inside th’ place, than he’s away off to a pack o’ folk, as is naught to him—I know Mr. Crump, I beant blind—folk as is too proud to speak to wives, they suld be to husbands—and now here you be after all ”—and Mrs. Crump, who had, in the fulness of her motherly heart, been sacrificing to the presiding genius of the occasion, at the bar, burst into tears, and proceeded to enlighten her audience as to what she had “ gone through for that man ;” while her irritated and indignant husband endeavoured, for some time in vain, to lead her from the room.

This with some difficulty he effected, and then, at considerable risk to his own personal safety, returned to look for little Rose. But the child was nowhere to be seen ; all his inquiries were vain ; no one had noticed her ; they imagined her to have followed her father, and Crump hoped it might be so.

Not all his eloquence, and the account of Mrs. Steyne’s dangerous state, could prevail on his prejudiced and ignorant spouse to agree to his returning ; and poor Crump, who possessed none of the qualifications of a Rarey, submitted, with as ill a grace as he dared, to the detention.

So inauspiciously concluded the festivities at "The Crichton," that night.

Crichton père cursed his ill-luck ; that " what with their whims, and their illness, and their confounded interference, the women played the very devil with everything." Crichton, the new-born, dreaming, babbling, kicked defiance at Fate, ever immutably, remorselessly, knitting up her web, of whitest, blackest, and many-stained threads, alike.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

"NEVER MORE."

"All was ended now, the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow,
All the aching of heart, the restless unsatisfied longing,
All the dull deep pain, and constant anguish of patience."

LONGFELLOW.

"The grave itself is but a covered bridge,
Leading from light to light, thro' a brief darkness."

LONGFELLOW.

"DYING!—dying!"—these words seemed in the echo of his flying feet, as the man dashed down the hill and across the silent lanes, and over the moss-covered road, where the rising moon began to glimmer through the trees o'erhead. He must see her, must speak to her, hear her voice, once more! and then, then, he would tell her all he would do; he would promise, comfort, hold her back from death—she should not die!—no, no; he could see all now; how foolish he had been, and had neglected her—but all could be made right yet; he could see a way; oh! twenty ways—a hundred!—they might be so happy!—they would be, too!—he would tell her—oh! she would not die. All this busy at his heart—still flying on, and the following echo still, "Dying, dying!"

He stopped a moment at the gate, and looked up. All so peaceful and beautiful—how could death be there? The casement of her window open; it would not be, surely if she were dying—something white fluttered out softly—the curtain dallying with the

faint breeze: on the grass lay some collars of his she had put to bleach a while since—it could not all look like this, unchanged and quiet, and she dying! No, no!

At the door he threw off his worn boots. Perhaps she slept, he might disturb her.

In three noiseless bounds he was in the room. All so still;—only a faint breathing. She slept, then; on tiptoe he approached the bed.

A little face was raised, and cried—“Father! she doesn’t speak—her cheeks are so cold!”

He put the boy aside—he stooped—he gazed into her face—clutched the hand that lay upon the quilt.

Cold, unanswering,—for the first time in all his life—it rested in his; then dropped passively, as the man fell on his knees with a terrible cry.

“O God! have mercy on me! dead!—my wife!—my wife!”

Crushed all hope—past all chance of atonement—gone for ever the patient, forbearing friend and help-mate.

Before him, one by one, in fearful distinctness, rose her trials and privations, the griefs she had endured, and how patiently she had borne with him—how simple her pleasures—how little made her happiness—how easily he might have secured it,—all came flooding up in that minute, as by a sudden flash revealed to him.

Those pricked fingers, those shrivelled hands would toil no more; go where he might, the faithful feet would never again follow him—the earnest eyes, that shone but for him, were quenched for ever!

What should he do!—how could she know!—God

help him ! send her back ! He prayed, as in all his life he had never done, that, but for an instant, she might come back, to ask her forgiveness—to look but on her living face once more. Ah, he should go mad ! he raved ; and the now quiet face seemed to mock him, in its repose.

“ What did she say, boy ? ” he cried. “ Did she ask for me ? Tell me, quick ! What did she say ? ”

Half-choked with tears, Philip repeated his mother’s last words.

“ ‘ Poor George ! ’ that’s me ! yes, yes, she thought of me ; and Rose, Rose, where’s Rose ? where’s my Rose ? my darling ? ”

Then, for the first time, Philip was aroused to the fact that his sister had not returned, and, unable to learn anything of his distracted father—he thinking Crump had most probably taken her home—late as it now was, set off, to make sure ; no trouble of his own could make him indifferent to her safety.

Poor David, doing his best to deafen himself to the full tide of a curtain lecture, was aroused by the voice of Philip, at the door, asking for his sister.

There comes a time when the most oppressed will eventually throw off the yoke ; and to David Crump that moment had arrived when he listened to the boy’s piteous tale of his mother’s death, his sister’s disappearance, and his father’s demented grief.

Hastily scrambling into his clothes, the good man literally and figuratively threw off his yoke, in the shape of Sarah’s brawny arms, and in a few minutes was accompanying the lad to “ The Crichton,” bestowing on himself no small share of blame for having so easily, in his own difficulty, lost sight of little Rose.

Of whom no tidings could be gained. Everybody had taken it for granted she had accompanied her father; and though many sympathized with the poor boy's distress, none could afford the least clue to assist him. The child must turn up, they said, "*of course*; what could anybody want with her?"

This last observation proffered by the genii of the ring, who had assumed the lamp also, apparently arrested on his course to the upper regions by the rumour of Philip's story, to whom, with much expression of pity, he tendered a shilling, which the boy—blinded perhaps by his tears—failed to see, or at least to accept.

"Where *can* she be?—oh, Mr. Crump, what shall we do?" said he, as the door of "The Crichton" was barred behind them.

"God knows, my lad! it's a sad case for you; but we can do nothing just now; she can't be far off; maybe some of the women have took her home with them. I'd as lieve cut off my hand as such a creature should get among any of the lot; but we'll find her in the morning, my word for it. And now, come, your father isn't fit to be left alone, lad; and not a soul o' the women will sit in that cottage by night, nor hardly by day now, I'm thinking. Eh! but it's a weary world for some of us."

Insisting upon Philip eating something, then going at once to his bed, the good man went straight to the silent chamber, where she who had, but now, blessed him for a friend, lay so still, her wretched husband pacing up and down the room.

Crump would have softened to him the fruitlessness of their search, and spoken of the missing child, even

by that anxiety to divert him from the delirium of grief which threatened his very reason; but his mind had gone back wholly to the past—to her he had so long neglected—everything else had lost interest with him. God alone knows the secret of that remorseful hell into which the unhappy man was plunged from that night—what tears, what agony, almost expiated the sins of his vain and selfish nature.

David thought of the first evening he had visited Birdiethorn, and how his heart had warmed to the gentle woman and her pretty children, and what an atmosphere of love and kindness seemed to surround her. His honest brain grew perplexed, as he asked himself how all this misery came about.

"Something wrong somewhere—there must be, for sure; and, for the life of me, I can't see how it's to be helped."

So pondering, much like the young and noble Dane, he fell asleep; and when he woke again, it was broad daylight. Steyne was gone, and Philip stood before him.

"I have been all down the village, Mr. Crump," he said mournfully; "but they haven't seen her, any of them; father is in at the 'Bluebottle;' he would not come away; he does look so bad; and they are giving him brandy—oh! if they wouldn't do it. But they won't heed me; and I thought if you'd please go to 'The Crichton' again, and ask about her. I must find her, she *can't* be lost."

With promises of a liberality almost fabulous at "Piert's Rest," two women were prevailed on to sit with the poor corpse; alone, a fortune would not have tempted either.

Steyne had returned, and it was not difficult to see how he had been employed. In his trembling hand he carried a bottle, which he endeavoured to hide under his coat, as he met Crump.

"For God's sake, Steyne," expostulated the good man, "don't give way to that now. In the state you are, you don't know the harm you may do yourself. For your children's sake, be a man; look at this poor lad, he's half dead with grief and worry—let me put it away; for *her* sake, my dear fellow, if she could see you, do I pray of you."

"I must, I must—I *can't*—I *must* have it!" said the shaking, unhappy creature, clutching the bottle tightly. "I couldn't live—I couldn't—my heart 'll break—let me be, let me be, I can't bear it without—you don't know, you don't know——"

He passed on up the stairs with difficulty, still clutching the bottle. There was nothing to be done; and the two went out upon the journey of enquiry.

All in vain. None had seen her since her father quitted the room. One woman made the boy's heart leap, by producing a spray of flowers Rose had worn, which her children had picked up that morning, on the road to Stillhaven, a long way from "The Crichton." But, as she observed, that said nothing; for it might have stuck to some one's dress in the room, and so been dropped there.

The gossips unconsciously grew sad, as they saw the boy's pale earnest face, that yet wore such a determined look, as though his grief lay too deep for tears, and he had resolved to act. "God help him," they said, as their eyes followed him on his weary journey. Many offered him refreshment; but he could

not eat, he said. In spite of all Crump's persuasion, he had not broken his fast. "It would choke me, Sir. I can't eat till I've found her. I must find her."

But when evening came, and they had made the tour of Piert's Rest, and far on the road to Stillhaven, and they were forced to return as they had set out, even David's heart failed him, and to the boy's suggestions of smugglers, who might have taken her off, and sold her for a slave, or hid her in the rocks, he could only reply, "It wasn't very likely." He had, in fact, no more pleasant solution of the mystery to offer.

He would have persuaded him to come home with him; but Philip would not hear of it. He would sleep in his mother's room, he said; and the women who had taken up their watch, in one which communicated with it, gladly consented; the door being left open for the companionship of his presence.

In a room below Steyne lay sleeping the feverish slumber of intoxication. With many cheering hopes, which he himself could not share, kind David took his leave, so absorbed in his neighbour's griefs as to be totally oblivious of the welcome that in all probability awaited him at home.

With a feeling of actual thankfulness at his heart, that his dear mother had been spared this last visitation, the tired boy lay down upon the temporary bed in the silent room. Thinking how impossible it was he should sleep that night, he slept; for Sleep and Love no man ever yet controlled in their coming.

Two hours might have passed, when he was awoke by the shrieks of the women, as they scrambled down stairs in the dark. Sitting up, he beheld his father, with features horribly distorted, and glowing eyes, bending over him.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

INTO THE DARK.

"My fault is past. But, oh! what form of prayer
Can serve my turn!"

SHAKESPEARE.

HE started up, but with a hand upon his breast his father was pressing him back.

"Dead! dead! dead!" he shouted, with fierce rapidity. "Lie down dead! she's asleep! I knew *she* wasn't dead! I said it; no, no, no, oh dead! lie down!"

"Father, father!" cried Philip, as he struggled to sit up, and looked into his face.

"Her eyes! her eyes! where'd you find them? I've looked for them everywhere! she couldn't see me!—give me her eyes! oh devil! I'll have her eyes!"

The boy struggled in all the desperation of terror, and, evading his cruel grasp, sprang to his feet, but the other pursued him with a maniacal yell—"Give me her eyes!—I knew she'd look at me if she could!—Devil! give them me!—ah! I've got you now! I'll have them!"

He clutched the boy—howled—shook him—dashed his head against the wall—grasped his throat with fingers that seemed thirsting for blood.

Horror gave Philip new strength in the unnatural struggle for his life; but the madman only yelled, laughed, and clenched his pitiless hands more firmly.

He tried to cry out, to say "Father!" to grasp his mother's hand, to see her once more—his eyes failed

—his breath came short—he fell back ; and the delirious wretch shouted exultingly :—

“ Ah devil ! I’ll kill you now ! I’ll have her eyes !—” and dragged him to the bed.

At that moment the low shuddering moan broke, as if from the earth, and swept round the cottage ; a breeze through the casement stirred the white drape of the bed, and wafted it out into the room, brushing the man’s face as it slowly sank into its place.

He shrieked, threw up his hands, and fell back, farther and farther, till he crouched shivering in a corner ; his eyes fixed upon the bed, where all was still again, as the echo of the sound died away below.

Philip drew a breath, and opened his eyes, hardly alive, while he beheld in amazement the sudden change.

Trembling, crying, clasping his hands ; the miserable man cowered in a corner of the room.

“ Dying ! dying ! dying !” he sobbed—“ how dying ? she can’t be—she won’t leave me—doesn’t she love me ? she said so—*my* Harriette, Harriette—*mine*—she said so herself in the church—the sun shone—shone—shone—the sun shone—the bells rang—through the ivy—ivy—the ivy—oh don’t go Harriette !—don’t leave me !—the boy died ; yes, yes, died—I couldn’t help it—oh don’t cry, cry, cry so—*don’t* leave me—I’ll work—I’ll be different !—oh how thin her hands are—I won’t, I won’t—oh Harriette only stay ! how thin and pale—‘ Poor George ’—that’s me !—‘ Poor George ! ’ dying ! dying ! dying !”

So he sobbed and whined ; clasped his hands, beat his knees, and cried again.

“ Father !” said the poor boy, kneeling before him ;

"father! it's me—your Philip!—don't you know me? Phil, and little Rosey—eh father?"

"Rose! Rose!—where?—dance! pretty Rose, dance!" and the wretched man moved his hands and head, as if seated at the instrument.

Suddenly, he leaped up, shrieking—"Ah! ah! take them off! take them off! down! down! Hell fire! hell fire! burning, burning!—save me!"

He tore his hair, his flesh, his clothes; he rushed round the room, then flung himself upon the floor, and writhed.

"Curse you for ever and ever! You've taken her! *my* Harriette—she was good, let her dance? I won't. Brandy! brandy! yes, quick—in my throat!—here! quick—I burn! here, here—she doesn't see me!—Ah!—see! see!" and he pointed upward so intently that the terrified child followed the direction of his finger. "Save me! save me—oh see where it comes!" He crawled behind the drapery of the bed and trembled.

Philip saw his cracked lips and parched tongue, and, creeping to his side, held a little water to his mouth. He dashed the vessel from him.

"Brandy! brandy! where is it? you said so! the girl's worth it! dance! dance! How they crowd and shout, and laugh! brandy! brandy! here in my throat ah! ah!"

He drew a long breath, and grasped an imaginary draught; then for a minute was silent; his delirious eyes fixed wildly on his son, who knelt beside him. He muttered to himself; and a horrible thrill stole over the lad; he with difficulty resisted the inclination to shriek. Some terrible purpose seemed forming in the madman's brain.

"He will kill me!" thought Philip; yet his limbs refused to move; he remained kneeling, gazing on his father, while he slowly rose, and crept softly, still muttering, from the room.

Quick Philip sprang to his feet; and, with hands shaking so as almost to be incapable, fastened the door, then that of the next room, and the one between; and piled all the furniture he could lift against them.

More dead than alive he sat, and in a short time came a stealthy footstep, that would have been inaudible to any ear not sharpened by terror.

Then the handle of the door was suddenly turned, and a violent thrust followed the unexpected resistance.

For a little while he heard nothing; then a whisper at the keyhole said "Harriette! *my* Harriette—let me in!" which was repeated several times more earnestly. Then Philip heard him go down—heard the crying and lamentation from below—the restless feet pacing up and down; then all was still.

Kneeling by his dead mother's side, straining his hearing to catch the slightest sound, the night passed; the feeble dawn came slowly into the silent chamber, where the unseemly disorder bore witness to what had passed.

He longed, yet dreaded, to go down. In what shape might he not encounter that awful figure!

It was still early, when he heard voices outside, and, directly after, some one entering by the window; then the door opened, and more came in. There was an exclamation—muttered sounds—hasty calling to one another.

"What can it be? They've found Rose!" thought Philip; and hastily removing his barricade, he hurried down.

In the pleasant sitting-room some men were gathered—they talked in eager whispers.

"Is it Rose?—Where is she?" cried Philip, pressing forward.

"Good God! there's the boy!" said one; and they would have held him back, but he broke through, and beheld his father.—Dead! His eyes wide open, his hair torn, his features distorted as when he had last seen him. From a wide gash in his throat the blood had flowed down upon the floor, and settled in a pool around him. His head rested upon a low chair that had been a favourite of Harriette's, where she had used to sit working, or nursing their children, and smiling up into his handsome face.

The men, rough as they were, were touched by the utter abandonment of the boy's grief, though they knew nothing of the last night's terrors. As well as they could, they cared for him, though their errand there had been none of the most merciful, as they said to good Crump, who came in soon after, and was horrified to the soul, to find what had taken place.

"You see, Master Crichton, he'm got a bill again all these here things; and, as he said, the poor chap was so queer in's head he might be for making away wi'm, or setting fire to the place: so he bade us be astir betimes, and we come, little thinking what we was to find."

"Then the poor children won't have anything?" asked David.

"Not a scrap, as far as I see, sir. There's rent owing too, I'm told ; but he'll make that right, and worth his while too."

"What an infernal scamp!" cried poor David, transported beyond all bounds of prudence.

"What d'ye say? What d'ye mean?" said the other, in amazement.

"Eh! but he'll have's reward!" said Crump, "as sure as there's a God in heaven."

"Well, I don't see how you can blame a man for taking his own: I suppose it's what we'd all do," returned the other.

Without further remark, David went in to where Philip lay, as they had placed him—on poor Rosey's little bed.

"You haven't found her, sir?" he asked anxiously, as Crump stood beside him.

"No, my lad, no," said he, with tears in his eyes: "but we shall, I daresay we shall."

If ever falsehood was pardonable, surely that was, by which, day after day, the kind man buoyed up the heart of the poor orphan; but days passed, and gave the lie to all his hopes and predictions. All his liberal expenditure and keen research, and Philip's more simple and touching inquiries, failed in eliciting the smallest clue.

Meanwhile Crichton's myrmidons brooded over the ruins of Birdiethorn's domestic altars. All their simple belongings were doomed: to the *tum-tooee*, as poor Rose called it—to her dainty cot, with its pure white hangings; the mother's pride and care; to Philip's Ancient History—all tied, labelled, numbered—even as, Great Father, we, thy creatures, do

range, and classify, and estimate, thy gifts! our love, our beauty, our peace, our soul's repose—First, last, most worthy of the highest bidder, in the great mart—one with another, pitiless.

So the days went on—Rumour was very busy, blowing hot and cold with that mouth of hers—chasing each bubble with another as frail; and bursting both with a new puff of her inconstant breath; and people came to stare, and wonder, and shudder over the place: the gossips glorying in the verification of their prognostics, and the new glamour of horror thrown about sweet Birdiethorn. * * *

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None that saw it ever forgot that solemn funeral which passed along the moss-covered road to the old church of Piert's Rest, where wife and husband are to lie side by side for evermore.

The two coffins, the sad history connected with them, the pale, grave boy, sole mourner—for Crump, good Crump, who had done so much, was laid, an unwilling prisoner, on a bed of sickness—and though half the village followed, he alone wore mourning dress.

The grave, so unusual in its width—the solemn service—the deep-tolling bell—the thoughts that, even to these rude minds, must come, not unmixed, we may believe, with something of remorse that they had not been quite the neighbours they might, to the poor human clay lying there.—The calm still evening—just in such they all remembered to have seen her, sitting with her work awaiting him upon that stone—“Aye, just there it was, not two feet away—dear heart, so it was!”

The boy thought of it, too, perhaps, and of another who should have held his hand, and looked, with him, the last, into their long home. "God help him!" said they—"how he cries, poor lad!"—and they wept; perhaps all; it is so hard not to weep in sympathy.

No; that burial would not be soon forgotten, even had it not been marked by the great equinoctial gale that rose that night, when the tides rolled higher than ever they had been known in the memory of man, and completely destroyed the pretty garden of Birdiethorn.

"Will you come with me, and have a cup of tea?" asked the man of obsequies, as he took from little Philip the melancholy symbols he had worn.

"No, thank you, sir," he replied; "I don't want any tea; I am not going home yet."

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

IN THE OLD CHURCH.—OUT AT SEA.—FALSE BELLS.

"I have no place to flee unto, and no man careth for my soul."

—————"Every one of these darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret—every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it! Something of the awfulness, even of death itself, is referable to this."—CHARLES DICKENS, "*Two Cities*."

HOME!—where was his home?

God knows it is a question might trouble many a heart, which does not care to lift the veil of self-woven deceit that hides it, even from itself.

What is home? I pass by luxury and splendour, with their ungratified desires and unfulfilled ambition; but what else makes it?

Ease—comfort—plenty—willing service—respect—and the righteous world's esteem?

Well—answer you, my friend—to whom each year has brought new ties, and fresh prosperity—whom the great "They" instances for your happy "home."

You think, no doubt, your fate a solitary one; who would so gladly lay down all, even to the memory of it—but for the companionship of a being formed in harmony with yourself—but to walk God's universe hand in hand with one, whose eyes and brain and heart should read it with you, whose voice should but echo your soul's inmost aspirations, whose heart find utterance on your lips—the visible sunshine of whose pre-

sence only should fill the dull blank your life knows, yet gives no name to—and make of the simplest shelter and the humblest fare a life-long “home.”

Aye! how glibly the mouth learns to betray the conscience!—“Home,” it says, and smiles—“Home!” where the heart is not, the eyes lighten not,—where the soul shrivels and pines, and the grave of all high thought and feeling is dug!—where love—like a poor bird whose natural sustenance is not understood by its owner—droops, sickens, faints; and, I had said, *dies*, but that he is immortal.

“Home,” this!—Make me a home of metal; of wheels, and cogs, and bells, and tunes, and images—and wind it up each twenty-fourth hour—and it shall go, I warrant, and strike, and chime, and play the symphonies, and keep its time withal—aye, quite correct—what more would you have? The automatons come out, go in, and act, all so perfect—a model “home.”

And so is yours, dear madam; all your five hundred friends biting their fingers off, in admiration of your new walnut suite, &c. &c.—your perfect toilettes—your unimpeachable dinners—your fine, generous husband—your sweet children—all alike the theme of admiration—what a home! what a model!—

Eh!—What!—A humble room; a desk inkstained; some well-worn quills and written sheets upon it; a much-used easy chair, and low footstool—neither empty—a face upturned to listen; eyes, looking down, down, into other eyes, answering out of depths, never ending—is this her picture of a “home?” For this would she give all?—aye, and your envy and admi-

ration, oh world! beside! But days come and go—things *are*.

You too, sir! in the home your own industry has reared; the ease that is almost luxury; your showy wife, her grand connexions, her clever children. Some twenty years ago you were not what you now are—not in any sense. A something seemed to die out when you parted from *her*. It was not your worse self, either. *She* understood you—was proud of you—how if you had married her?—mere money-grubbing had not then contented you, perhaps—and your “home?”—Ah, well! no more. Let fall the veil over the dwindled, inmost, better self—God alone knows the rest!

“Solitary case!—singular mischance!”—so say you, and you, and you.

“Beautifully clean your place is, dear! One might eat off any part of it!”—

“My goodness, gracious!” (*Soliloquiter*) “she wouldn’t say so, if she saw the slut’s hole in the kitchen.”

“Splendid design! Sublime view! House and grounds perfect! Light, and sunshine, and peace, everywhere!”

But you don’t see the skeleton closet; and you are thinking what a cruel fate it is that you should be so much worse off than your neighbour, having such a bugbear in *your* home.

Which, begging pardon for the digression, brings me back to little Philip, who, at least, cannot labour under any deception as to the quality of his home, seeing he is absolutely destitute of any.

Each, supposing the other to have some better right, had relieved their mind of any responsibility. "Mr. Crichton would sure do something for him, he'd made enow by the poor man." Or, "Mr. Crump seemed to have took a fancy to th' lad, and he wur better able to afford it than they was." And so he was left to himself; which he would not have been had poor David been in a condition even to think for him; but he was laid, hand, foot, and brain, by rheumatic fever; just now only conscious enough of Philip's troubles to irritate his better half, by mingling the name in his uneasy mutterings and rambling talk.

They had all gone, and the boy sat upon the new-filled grave—that last dreary tie that remains between us and what we have loved best.

At first he had not been able to realize the dreadful idea of both his parents' death. He still fancied, somehow, that his mother would come to console him and cry with him. He could not believe that he should never see her again. So, too often, we do not take in completely the certainty that we have looked our last upon the beloved face; and a strange, undefined hope still haunts us, that we shall, somehow, again meet the dear one, in the flesh, and share our grief with them.

But the chilling breeze and the cold rain roused him; and, as he sat up, he asked himself the question—where should he go?

To Birdiethorn?—where most probably the bare walls now echoed to that dreadful cry which made him shudder to think of.

To Crump's?—where his sensitive spirit told him

he had already given more trouble than he had any right to do.

Nowhere, in all the wide world, had he a claim for shelter even from the rain that fell. The church-door stood open, and the boy mechanically walked in.

The complete silence of the place, the solemn grandeur that yet seemed to welcome him to its rest, was soothing to his disquieted mind ; and he wandered on, down the darkening old aisles, thinking and remembering. That was the place where they used to sit on Sundays—that was the stone where Rose used to tiptoe, with her arm about his neck, as he lifted her into her seat—he had never been further down the church than that—he felt almost afraid. Turning round, looking up, he saw the organ. Ah ! that was where the beautiful music came from, and where the white-robed boys sat and sang.

And here were the monuments of people who had died ages ago. How grim and still they were, all forgotten now : some one had cried for them when they died, and wished to die and be buried with them perhaps—and those had died and were forgotten too.

He wondered had any of those ever felt so miserable as he did. He thought no one ever could ; every one but he must have some friend, some one to pity them, and to cry with them. If he had but dear sweet Rosey, if he could but hear her say " My Phil," and rest her little golden head on his shoulder again : oh ! he would beg, or work, or do anything for her : but he had no one, not in the whole world.

The sickly beams of the setting sun, breaking through the clouds, streamed in by the painted window,

and decked with a purple halo the noseless knight lying in stony slumber, with uplifted hands, beside the Lady Grizzel his wife, to whose chin it imparted a faint glow: thence, gliding by the cherub supporters, rested upon the virgin kirtle of a recumbent spinster, alone in her marblehood, and burnished the helmet of a fierce bearded warrior, time-bereft of toes and fingers—whom tradition asserted to have been the veritable Piert of piratical memory.

How he frowned, and to Philip's imagination seemed, even with closed eyes, to be aware of him. The boy remembered all the tales he had heard of the smuggler and bandit chief; violence, rapine, murder. How horrible if his sweet sister had been carried off by such men!

So painful appeared his own insufficiency, his absolutely powerless condition, whenever he thought of her loss: it was almost unbearable. "If I was but a man—if I was but a rich man," he thought, "I *would* find her."

He had reached the altar. A small white slab, with but a name on, met his eyes. He remembered it was a little child, of a very great and wealthy gentleman. He and Rose had stood by at the burial—the gentleman wept bitterly, and knelt in the vault, and could hardly be led from it. He would have given all his money, they said, to save the boy, but it died; it was his only child.

Money would not save people from death; and yet how hard they tried for it. It was that took father and Rose to the public-house. Mr. Crump said Crichton made money of them. He had plenty too, and yet he had taken all the poor things from Birdie-

thorn. The men said he had a right, for money he had lent father. He knew how bad they wanted it at home, and yet would let father spend it in drink, and even when he was nigh mad. He turned mother out too, that night; how hard and cruel he looked.

The sunbeams, lifted higher, stole softly up, up—by the cloud of cherubim at the choir—by the gilded organ-pipes, softly to the fretted roof; leaving all below in twilight. The shadows deepened, and, on the altar-steps the boy sat thinking.

A loud noise, reverberating through the building, startled him. It was the closing of the great doors. He lifted up his head and listened. The chain rattled, then footsteps sounded outside, the wicket gate slammed. His head sank again to his hands, upon his knees. He was locked in. For a boy of ten years old it would seem no common ordeal to pass the night in an ancient shadow-haunted church alone, and with the recollection of such scenes as he had lately witnessed. A week ago Philip, though no coward, would have shrunk from such an undertaking.

The old banners overhead moved now and again, as a bat or owl flitted ghostly through some unseen outlet. The shadows deepened, and the boy still sat, thinking.

How far into that troublous sea his young mind drifted we cannot know. How tossed amid reason, and doubt, and vain asking of cause and result—of justice and mercy; how divided between teachings long revered, and cold hard realities experienced; who can tell? Most of us look back to such a period when we too battled in such a sea; not two, perhaps,

to set foot upon the same landing-spot, how few upon the solid rock !

After midnight the tempest broke, which little Piert's Rest, and all the country round, was to remember with a shudder for many a year to come.

The whole armament of heaven seemed loosed upon the earth—the winds raged, the clouds opened their floodgates, the sea lashed the beach in the very madness of storm. Houses far inland were swamped by its waves ; cottages unroofed by the merciless winds, boats torn from their moorings, and borne out and away, never to return. Whole families fled from dwellings that threatened ruin every instant, and, by the glare of the lightning, sped up from the beach, which the greedy ocean seemed ravening to swallow. The crash of the thunder, the bellowing of the waves, the dashing rain and howling winds, sounded like the conference of unearthly destroyers over a doomed world. People flocked together, sought companionship at any rate ; neighbours forgot their feuds, and became friends.

And amid all, sat in the grey ancient church a little boy, alone ; his head resting on his hand, his eyes turned to the painted window, where the ivy knocked wildly, reft and torn from its long support ; and anon the lightning gleamed across the pierced Saviour, and the pale Marys at the Cross's foot.

What wonder if, remembering his mother, his little sister, his suicide father, and his rifled home, the poor boy should believe in an Avenger at hand, and flatter himself that to-morrow the town would ring with the destruction of " The Crichton " and its owner.

Older than he are every day, in their petty wisdom complacently planning out the behests of Providen-

expounding the shadowy panorama, by no better light.

Three indeed, saw the sun set, and talked of the morrow, who never met it here.

One, sleeping in his boat—the father of a little family, the support of a bed-ridden mother, industrious, kind-hearted, sober—borne away, dashed, bruised, battered; died piecemeal, far from human help, with a prayer for those at home upon his lips.

Another, a young mother, carried with her baby from under the tottering roof, died in her husband's arms, leaving her helpless first-born to sooth, or aggravate, his despair.

The third, a pitiful, silly, ne'er-do-well, Dickey Glossop by name, suffocated, drunk, in a pool, not half a mile from "The Crichton." Poor Dickey! the water had not harmed him but for the draughts of the "good creature" he had previously imbibed.

Little Philip, listening, watching, twice heard the heavy spray dash against the old church wall, far as it stood inland,—heard the heavy groans of the surf-beaten shore, and thought. Its fury spent, appeased by the sacrifices to its might; the tempest lulled, the lightning heralded less frequently the distant thunder, which in a while muttered afar off; the sea sobbed over its victims, as it crept back from the land; and the gusty winds, like lions chained unwillingly, in suppressed roars gave token of strength yet unspent.

Dawn crept timidly up and peeped over the hill-tops; then beckoned the Day, which, hurrying in, kissed Nature's tearful face, and gathered her to his breast, and soothed her till she smiled, and her drenched bosom glowed once more beneath his warmth.

Then, from rocked tree-tops and sheltered eaves, from stony clefts, from beds of reed and mud, or mossy roots: from knotty bark, wild heath, or opening flower-bell,—each from his “home” came the first-created of the Great Master, and praised Him for the Sunshine and the Life. Even into the desolate heart of the boy, storm-swept as it was, that glorious sunshine came, and almost he repented of the thoughts he had welcomed and entertained. Punishment had visited the cause of all their suffering; yes, the storm was past, and now, now, in the sunshine came a promise—he should find her—oh! he felt it must be so.

He had crept up the steps, shading himself from the fierce lightning. His head resting on the Commandments at the communion, he dozed as day dawned, worn out by watching and grief; and slept, till, with a loud clang, the bells overhead broke out:—

Ring a ding ding dong—Dong dong ding ding dong—Ding a dong, ding a dong—Ring ding a ding ding, ding dong——

He sprang up, his hands upon his head. Chiming! pealing!—the knell of yesterday was in his ears, even while he slept. Was it these bells? could it be the same?—ringing—chiming!—a more merry peal never roused the echoes of Piert’s Rest.

Bursting out again! glorying, exulting in their own music! Was he dreaming?

He rushed down the aisle; he would have fled from the sound, but it seemed to come louder—merrier. From the open door he could see that new-made grave—so awful, so real.

The boy burst into tears. Louder rang the bells—

false to their echoes of yesterday, which had shared his grief—mockery of mockeries!

Come back, oh troubled sea! onward again with your drift of doubt, and question, and uncertainty,—bear him away. The tempest, which has laid waste the bonny vale of Birdiethorn, and made a desert of its much-prized garden, has left the house of Crichton scathless. The bells that tolled yesternight for your mother broken-hearted, ring this bright morning for *his* pride and pleasure.

See! here they come!—a gay and sparkling group. White vests and snowy garments, fair faces and bright eyes—fair and bright as become the sponsors of the happy little mortal unconsciously irresponsible in their midst.

Foremost Père Crichton; no vest whiter, no face more radiant.

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

FIRE.

"In the name of this child, thou dost renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and all the sinful desires and covetousness thereof, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them!"—

BAPTISMAL SERVICE.

"I renounce them all."—RICHARD CRICHTON.

WITHOUT a second look at the approaching group, Philip darted from a side door, rushed down the mossy deserted side path, and flung himself upon the wet earth with passionate despair. He shed no tears, as in the past night; the tenderness of his grief was done.

As he rose, the christening party was quitting the church: a smiling young godmamma, the proud bearer of the newly-made unconscious little Christian. The happy parents came first, all radiant and glowing with their lightly-sitting responsibilities.

"Goodness me!" cried pretty Mrs. Crichton, as they came down the centre path, and thereby causing a sudden halt in the procession—"look at that poor child, how pale and miserable! And la! it's a grave he's sitting on, a fresh-made grave!" She shuddered on her husband's arm.

"Richard, do speak to him, poor child!" But Richard, moving onwards, seemed in no way inclined to comply.

"It's Steyne's boy—sad affair you know, my dear. They were buried yesterday, poor creatures! Nurse can take him a shilling, if you please."

But nurse was at that moment quite in the rear of

the party ; and, in the fulness of her motherly sympathies Mrs. Crichton had so pressed forward that they stood within a few steps of Philip, the publican extending his hand with the proffered bounty.

The orphan was aware of his intention ere he had spoken a word, and the well-meant sympathy of the gentle wife was lost upon him, as, with flashing eyes, he started to his feet.

"Don't you offer me your money !" he cried, stamping his foot. "You killed my mother, you did ! and my father too. They wouldn't have died but for you. I hate you ! I hate your public-houses ! I wish they were all burned, I do ! If I was a man you wouldn't offer me your money—you should be afraid to come near me. I could kill you !" His boy's voice deepened to a fierce harshness, his pale face flushed, as he looked defiantly into the face of Crichton. The equable publican almost shrank before the childish wrath.

"God forgive you, boy !" said Mrs. Crichton.

"You'd better say forgive *him*, I think," pursued the orphan, his eyes still fixed upon Crichton. "I had a little sister once, but she's lost, and through him, his public-house, and his drink. Didn't he know all along ? My good, beautiful little sister !"—for a moment his voice faltered, but he rallied bravely—"maybe your baby there'll be left some day with no home to go to, and nobody to care for."

"Oh Richard !" cried the young mother, trembling as she clung to him. The "Admirable" made a step towards the lad, as though to lay hold of him ; but Philip started back.

"You'd better not touch me !" he cried.

"You are a miserable, sinful boy—a dangerous boy,"

said the publican. "We meant to befriend you; in all kindness Mrs. Crichton came to speak to you, and this is how you return it. What is your father's folly and ill-luck to me? But you are only a child—I will send some one from the workhouse: they will take care of you there, and put you to work, which I am afraid you have not been used to. Come, my love."

Tenderly taking his wife's arm, he led her across the nearest way to the gate, where the assembled group awaited them; and—ill-omened christening—poor Mrs. Crichton fell to weeping, which lasted till they reached home.

The workhouse! Those words had roused a fire in Philip's breast that even the memory of those who lay quiet beneath his feet could not stifle. All the poor fellow's notions of independence, of lawful, honest, native pride, born with him, fostered by his favourite study, by his mother's example,—all recoiled at the mention of it. Besides, he had one great purpose for life, one fixed idea that had never left him. He must seek Rose everywhere, if he walked the whole world over; and how do that, if once sent to the workhouse? No, that could not be!

The bells had rung the party home, and were silent—the church was deserted—he was alone, but for those who lay under that wet earth.

Yes, every step now would take him farther from them; but it must be, and, with a last look from time to time, as long as the bare mound remained visible, he soon left the dim old church, and the quiet, solemn churchyard, far behind.

He had no clue, even the slightest, no indication of where, even with a possibility of success, he should

seek his lost sister ; yet his plan was not so badly laid, even for an older head than his.

He remembered how, in her many perplexities, his mother had, more than once, sought the advice of a clergyman, whom she had known long before her marriage. He remembered the name of this gentleman ; and of his abode he recollected thus much,—that he had accompanied his mother in her visits from their home in London. From that point the boy felt sure he could not miss the road, but all he knew of the *locale* of his starting-place was the name of the street,—Brown-street—the scene of so many hardships he never could forget ; but whether N., S., E., or W., or which combination of any of these, Philip would have been puzzled even to guess.

So to Brown-street, London ; thence, on the faith of his recollections of some two years back, to make his way to Mr. Plunkett, the good clergyman, and repose in him the history of his woes ; behold the plan of young Steyne's destination, a somewhat indefinite one, and capable of improvement as to accuracy, it must be confessed : but are not all expediency, probabilities, and possibility too, almost, comparative ? —some of us would not perhaps too hastily reject the idea of even footing the two hundred miles, could we feel certain to find a real friend at the end of them.

And now, to hasten the execution of his project, here was the dread workhouse set in view. It had needed that perhaps, to tear him from the poor consolation of that double grave : and now he was bent only on putting all possible distance between him and the object of his dread. He would fain have seen good Crump once more, and have acquainted him

with his determination, but that was impossible, and, besides, Philip shrank from adding to the debt he had already incurred at the hands of the good man.

Small preparation he needed, whose wardrobe consisted of what he wore. In his pocket he had a handful of copper and some few small silver bits, collected for him among the poor folks who had followed the funeral, which they had slipped in as he wept, all unconscious of the kindness. But, with the self-reliance of such characters, Philip feared not. Lots of things he could find to do upon the road, oh! plenty, he was certain!

Away, then, from Old Piert's Rest, quiet and sleepy, away past the New—bustling, upstart, consequential—out down upon the beach, where the moon, and the sea, and the cliffs have it all to themselves in the still night, until they are taken in by one pair of young eyes that read in their solemnity sympathy for his own sorrows.

Here, for the last time, upon the beach, he thought he would for a while rest himself, and break his fast of that day; for he had only stayed to purchase, at the last shop in the village, some of the currant bread peculiar to the neighbourhood.

The rest was most welcome to his tired feet, and he was pondering within himself how he should, with least risk of discovery, cross to L——; for Philip imagined the publican constantly in pursuit, with a host of work-house myrmidons at his heels: when his attention was called to a red light cast upon the rocks beyond where he sat. While he gazed, it increased, redder and higher, like the reflection from some large conflagration.

He jumped to his feet ; and, scrambling to a higher part of the beach, looked towards Piert's Rest, and beheld a column of dense lurid smoke, whence every instant darted tongues of living fire, and hosts of sparks shot high into the air, and fell again in showers. The trees, the neighbouring buildings, were lighted up, Philip at once recognized the spot. " The Crichton ! " he shouted—" it's on fire "—" The Crichton ! " The bread, almost untasted, fell from his hand, as, springing from the beach, he ran by the nearest way to the village and up the hill. Whither every one seemed hastening ; crying, one to another, that " Master Crichton's grand new house were burning."

On the spot was already assembled a dense crowd, talking, bawling, advising, fault-finding, wondering, with an energy that, if rightly directed, might quickly have extinguished the flames. But active hands were at work ; the extension, at least, of the mischief was stopped.

A Frenchman has told us that there is something not displeasing in the misfortunes even of our dearest friends, and a publican is seldom held passing dear in the hearts of his neighbours : still we wish, for the credit of human nature, we could believe that the feeling was any other than disappointment when it was discovered that the damage extended no further than to a barn, an outhouse, a pig-sty and dove-cote ; part of the old premises, where a quantity of straw and various combustible matter had been allowed to accumulate.

But talking makes men thirsty ; besides the origin of the fire had to be discovered,—it might break out

again: all good reasons why the bar of "The Crichton" should be soon well thronged; while the yet smoking, steaming ruins, invited the inspection of many of the idlers.

Again disappointed in his expectations of a signal retribution in his behalf, Philip was making the best of his way from the scene, regretting that he had been induced to retrace his steps, when, passing a side door of the public-house, he felt himself suddenly seized by the shoulder, and a rough voice exclaimed—"Here's another of ye! Eh, my lad," he cried, as he looked into the boy's face—"so it's you, is it? Master Crichton were right enuff; he'll be rarely glad; eh, but he'd give his little finger to find you, he would—come along!"

"You leave go my shoulder!—what have I done!" exclaimed the boy, struggling with his captor, who dragged him by main force into the house, calling loudly on the constable who was, as he himself phrased it, "investigating for the occasion of the fire"—and now came bustling in with a whole retinue at his heels, and young Steyne quickly found himself the centre of attraction to the multitude which the conflagration had called together.

"So another of them," said Mr. Crichton, advancing. "Ah! that's he! Hold him fast, Grappit! that's the ringleader; he's set them on. I said he was a dangerous lad. This very morning he wished I was burned out. Search him! ah, yes, by all means search him!"

The search disclosed divers copper and small silver coin, which might have been recognised by many present; a piece of currant bread, and a small folded paper, round which, as the constable unwrapped it, they

crowded ; expecting, no doubt, some terrible device of a combustible nature, the more for the boy's eager petition that it might be given back.

" A bit of hair !"

" His mother's !—ah, poor lad !"

The sympathies of the women were enlisted. " They didn't believe he'd go to do any mortal living an injury. He'd always been a quiet boy."

" Look sharp after him, Grappit—only this morning he threatened to burn me out."

" I see him going as fast as he could scamper, towards the beach, this very evening, Master Crichton," put in an obsequious witness.

" After the mischief was done, in course," observed another.

" He bears the master a grudge, that's certain," added the shock-headed ostler, who had captured Philip.

To the lock-up, then, was the poor lad doomed that night, in company with three others, no older, and little less forlorn, than himself. Their offence that of setting fire to some furze and dried haulms in a piece of waste adjoining the premises of the publican ; though, as this was somewhere about three hours before the fire broke out, it might, perhaps, with equal reason have been attributed to the agency of the " splendid London gin " which the shock-headed ostler had been imbibing very freely in honour of the christening, and under the powerful influence of which, he had stuck a candle-end in the dilapidated rush-seat of a ruinous chair, in the outhouse, nor remembered it till the smoke and flames warned them all of the

vicinity of the fire ; when, in the excess of his zeal, he rushed forth to pounce upon the shivering urchins whose little attempt at domesticity in the back field was at once recalled to their cost.

This, then, was Philip's first step in the plan he had chalked out for himself. He had contemplated a nap in the cleft of a rock, with seaweed for his pillow, the pitying ocean to his lullaby, the moon his night-lamp ; Fate had willed for him a flock-mattress in the lock-up of Old Piert's Rest, with the fumes of the watchmen's pipes and the droning monotone of their voices in the outer room, as they commented on the ruffianism of the boy who had threatened to burn out Master Crichton, and had so artfully planned the deed.

"They can't hurt me," said the boy to himself, as he tried to shut out the voices detailing to one another his own sad family history ; "I've done nothing, and they can't hurt me."

Haply, young Steyne, thy knowledge or philosophy is to be improved ere long. For Justice nods at times, even among the high and mighty seats of her administration, and such things have been ere now written down in all the solemnity of her decrees as that we here record. These poor, half-starved, miserable urchins—against whom, with all the evidence so readily obtainable, nothing more could be proved than they had lighted a fire of rubbish to warm their chilled limbs—were committed to gaol for a certain time, with the addition of a sound whipping.

On Philip Steyne graver judgment must have fallen. True, even the other boys, when interrogated, denied

that he had been of their company ; true, good Crump, bandaged like a mummy, and defying alike the wrath of rheumatics and his better half, stood up stoutly in defence of his little friend ; true, not a soul could be found, not redolent of the " Admirable's " " cordial compounds," who could speak a syllable against the boy. But he had " threatened ;" everybody knew what a spirit he had—that could not be denied ; he fancied himself wronged ; his mother had set him against Mr. Crichton ; it was plain enough.

Let us believe that it was a touch of conscience—awakened, perhaps, as the dead mother seemed to look out of those earnest, horror-stricken eyes—and not with any idea of how it might be remembered at licensing-day, that the publican put in a word ; and the magistrate, with a high eulogium on the generosity and " Christian spirit " of Mr. Crichton, commuted the whipping part of the sentence to a term of solitary confinement, the culprit to be sent to a reformatory for five years.

" The best thing that could happen to him," said one of the benevolent gentlemen upon the bench.

I wonder if that gentleman could have looked into the heart of the poor child, and seen the crushing agony caused by those words—" five years,"—if he would have revoked his sentence.

Five years ! Oh ! where would Rose be then ! How could he live, and eat, and sleep through five years, and not even seek her !

" God bless you, my poor lad ; God bless and keep you, Phil ! Never mind, my old fellow ; I'll see what can be done ; I'll come and see you. Yes, yes, I

know, I know ; but we'll be looking for her high and low, my boy ; we won't rest till she's found."

Tears were rolling down good David's face, as he wrung the boy's hands in his at parting. Young Steyne looked at him with dry eyes, round which the shadow had deepened. "Thank you,"—said he as he pressed the hard hands very tightly within his own—"thank you, good-bye, I shan't ever see her now—five years!—"

He repeated the words, as he turned away, with a tone and look so hopeless, so lost and broken, that the women near him burst into tears, and some swore it was a shame—"how 'd old —— like it hisself?—"



Another touch of conscience, let us hope, in the breast of the publican, as he encountered that night the young man whom we have elsewhere described as remarkable for the growth of ringlets.

"No," Mr. Crichton repeated something he had before said ; "I wish to give no offence, but really the whole affair has made so much unpleasantness, I am sick of the lot. I'll wash my hands of it all. *Of course* I know nothing about the girl, and am bound not to know ; I do not say *you* do, I suppose you don't ; but things get about, and so much has been said, one way and the other, that—in short, Mr. Skurrick, I mean no offence, but I'd rather——"

"That I'd go elsewhere—that's the long and the short of it," said the other.

"Well, not so much yourself as the man—that fellow Hinton—coming to and fro—I say nothing, you

know—I'm not bound to know all that passes in my house ; but there are some things that—well, in short I'd rather he did not come, he can't *keep a close mouth*, and in fact——."

"All right, I see ; don't you be afraid, Crichton," returned the other. "I suppose I can stay to-night?"

"Oh ! certainly, certainly ; and it's more of that man I speak. In his liquor, you see, he is apt to talk. I wish to give no offence—I hope you understand—but the character of my house——"

"All right ; we're off to-morrow. Good-night."

"The house is sure to fill next week with the committees," soliloquized "The Admirable," as he took his way to his cozy bed-chamber.

At the same hour, Philip Steyne walked his solitary cell, seating himself at intervals upon the coarse hard pallet, and mechanically repeated the words that had haunted him through the day, till he ceased to realise their meaning.

"Five years !"

That time last night he was a wanderer—an out-cast ; but he had a purpose, a will to carry it out—he was free. A prisoner now, unjustly ; hope, power, usefulness, independence—all blotted out.

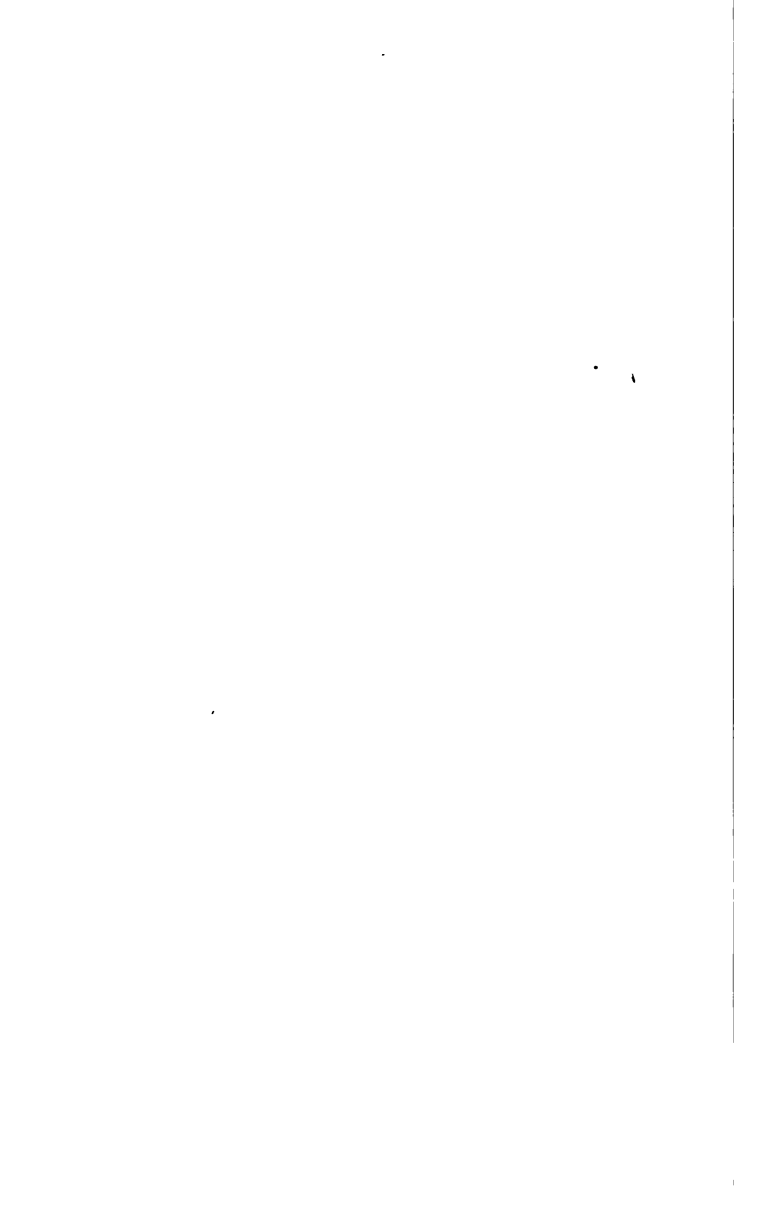
They brought him his supper : a better one than he or his dead mother had eaten for many a day of her hard-worked life. They lighted a dim lamp, in the wall between two cells.

As memory came slowly back, from the horrid fixedness of that one idea, arose the pictures of those days now gone for ever. How had circumstance sapped

and undermined the very foundation of the fabric, till, piece by piece, hour by hour, it had slipped from his grasp, never to be recalled ! He recounted all he had lost—home—parents—sister—liberty, and in questioning, doubting, vainly seeking cause—still losing as he thought.

The day was gone out ; the pitying night was come, and they left him alone with it and his Grief.

END OF THE FIRST PART.



PART SECOND. SEEKING.



CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

A DOUBT.—A HAPPY RELEASE.

Oh, had I faith, as in the days gone by,
That knew no doubt, and feared no mystery !

And yet perhaps 'twere best
That she should die, with all the sunshine on her,
And all the benedictions of the mourning,
Before this affluence of golden light
Shall fade into a cold and clouded grey,
Then into darkness. LONGFELLOW.

FIVE years have passed.

A bold assertion it seems. By a few pen-strokes claiming your credence, O patient reader, to the fact that in these four words we dismiss the time of seed, blossom, harvest and slumber ; the hopes, births and joys ; the deaths, marriages, and sorrows, of twenty recurring seasons.

Such a tax on your imagination as when honest Tom Noddy—whom you have known as an exemplary tallow chandler, an immaculate cotton spinner, or waste dealer—rising from his genuflexion to royalty, you are requested henceforth to behold in him the loyal, trusty,

and well-beloved knight, whom, as such, you are bound to respect and honour. All by virtue of the stroke of no less mild a weapon than has brought you and I acquaint.

Five years—not long—"It seems but yesterday, this day five years." The well-saved furniture is little worse, the thrifty housewife eyes complacently her yet fresh tapestries, her curtains and coverlids, still unsullied. "Who'd think they'd been in wear these five years?" and shakes, and smooths, and triumphantly prognosticates for them another five years' career, as free from speck or tarnish.

A brief, swift time to some.

Five years of taking in pussy's meat, and pouring out her milk, of toasting the muffin, and dozing over the weekly paper in the chimney corner, or the seventh day's sermon in the cozy pew.

Five years of gentle flowing, quiet little stream. Five years of dash and unrest, ne'er spent, headlong torrent.

Five years of the stone cell, the grated loophole, the painfully scratched register. Five years! there are three times that to come. 'Tis but a small part, yet oh, it seems a lifetime! The babe that was just born, when he came here first a prisoner, must be a man by now. Only five years! The iron has worn away the skin upon the poor ankle, the manacle hangs loose upon the wrist. Three times five!—will it have worn to the bone by then? Ah, it will not last; he shall die, long before another five! Up and down, pace the cell, bow the head, count the shadow of the grated bars—still the same—eight each way. Five years. Three times that—sixty seasons yet!

Friend of the minute, across this page, what may not the five years have brought you? To your hearth and home little faces and pattering feet, in which your own childhood is renewed, and for whom new words are added to your daily prayer; or haply for whose misery your tears fall more bitterly than for the pinch iron want has fixed upon yourself? Looking back across those twenty seasons, see you the summer or the winter plainest? Call you to mind the improved opportunity, the good resolve acted out, the evil impulse crushed; dear friendships formed, new ties drawn close—hope your household guest?

These five years, have they brought you good fortune, in the marring of your dearest aspirations, or misery, mayhap, in the granting of your heart's desire? In them you have—favoured of Heaven—found its best gift, the *one* of all, to walk with you through life unto death. Or you have perhaps awoke, to find the temple you had raised a baseless ruin, to count the shadow of your prison bars, and mark the wearing of the iron, day by day.

It is a fine May morning, the daisies will be glistening on the grass-grown graves of "Piert's Rest;" but we have not now to do with them. We are far from the old scene, though the same sunshine lights up a huge formal-looking building, standing alone in a wide extent of open country.

Upon the slip of grass, on the side which receives the morning sun, two gentlemen are pacing to and fro; one, by his dress, we know is a clergyman, the other the superintendent of the reformatory.

"Yes," continues the latter, in answer to a remark from his companion; "a singular lad, an exception to

every ordinary case, one that it is impossible to deal with by any general rule."

"He seemed intelligent, thoughtful."

"Yes, more thought than is natural, or good for any boy in his circumstances. He broods over some one idea, night and day, with the perseverance of a monomaniac. The fellow's life is actually devoured by the fever of his thoughts. He had a severe illness when he was received, I am told—was on the verge of death, in fact; since then he has been just as you have seen him. Tractable enough, with one exception, but in that perpetual mood of brooding anxiety."

"You say one exception."

"Yes; one of the lads informed us that Steyne never joined throughout in the Lord's Prayer with the rest; it was inquired into—your predecessor, Mr. Limpett, had the boy up to question him."

"He denied it, of course?"

"Not a bit—he owned to it, and when Mr. Limpett took him to task, confessed that he could not, in his conscience, ask to be forgiven his sins as he forgave, since he had from his heart determined never to forgive one man as long as he lived."

"A young heathen—shocking!"

"Well, there's not a doubt but the lad had been hardly used. It was pretty clear that he was innocent in the matter that sent him here; and it seems his family had suffered some wrong at the hands of the prosecutor; but Mr. Limpett very kindly showed the boy the error of his notions, and insisted on his repeating the prayers with the rest, though I believe the young rebel was only half convinced. It's asto-

nishing, when some of these young folks do trouble themselves to think, what work they make with their philosophy—must puzzle you sometimes, I fancy, to help them out of the slough. But Steyne's a good lad, take him all in all; we have had less trouble with him than any other in the place; I only wish he had made a better start in life, and in more eligible company than he can't help having occasionally here."

"Yes, it's a pity. He leaves to-day; what does he follow?"

"Nothing. He has shown no particular talent beyond a slight knack at mechanical construction. His whole mind is bent upon going in search of a baby sister, who was stolen years ago."

"Ah, I have heard something of it."

"A wild story-book notion; but the only person who seems to take any interest in him gives way to it, so nobody else can interfere. Now they have opened the doors, we can go through, I will show you the vaults; you'll be surprised at the extent—this way."

Meanwhile in one of the large airy dormitories, near an open casement, sat two boys, upon one of the clean narrow beds, on which, in marching order, lay all the worldly possessions of the elder.

Whom five years have not so changed, but that we at once recognise him.

The earnest eyes, with their deep shadows, add to the intense expression of the pale face, with the short upper lip, square chin, wide brow, and thick dark hair. It would seem that Philip's solitary prison life has improved upon the poor promise of his childhood, though the great prerogative of humanity has set its

mark already upon his young features, and he looks much older than in fact he is.

Upon the bed beside him sat a young boy ; he could not be more than six years old, so stunted, pitiful, and sickly, yet with so much of the flaxen-haired innocence of the pretty child remaining, you must have wondered how even suspicion could charge such a creature with worse fault than its mother's hand might well correct.

He held a hand of the elder boy between his own, his head resting on Philip's breast, for a painful hacking cough shook his weak frame, and made the support welcome as it was lovingly given. The eyes of both were fixed upon the road leading across the common to the house.

"And when it comes in sight, shall you be going then?" asked the younger one, breaking silence.

"Yes, Bob ; almost directly," said the other, drawing the little fellow closer to him.

"Quite gone, Philip, you'll soon be," returned the child, sorrowfully ; "and I shall be all by myself."

"Oh, not all ; there's Sam Free, and Ned Lamb, good boys ; you'll get along with them, Bob."

"They're not like you, Philip, you've been so good—the only one that ever was good to me, 'sides my mother ; you will go and see her, Philip, *won't* you ? and tell her it wasn't me that took the clothes, only as they allus had a spite again mother ; she knows it wasn't, though ; but if you'd see her and tell her you'd knowed me. You'll not forget the name?"

"Deering—no, indeed, I'll not forget, I'll find her out ; I will indeed, Bob, the moment I get to London."

"Are you a-going straight to London?"

"Yes, Bob, as fast as ever I can, and I do wish you was coming out with me; but you won't be dull, will you? They're very good here; and as to the bad boys, when they see you don't want to hear their tales, they'll let you be. Your mother'll get to see you, I dare say, and three years will soon pass, Bob. Why, see, I have been five, and now it's gone by."

The child shook its little head with unnatural gravity.

"I shall be in there, long afore that." And he pointed to the burying-ground, just visible where they sat.

"Oh, nonsense, Bob; you mustn't talk so! I used to think so when first I came; but see, here I am, all right."

"You hadn't got a cough like I have. Mother used to say it'll be a mercy if it took me afore her, there'd nobody care for me when she was gone. I would like to see mother though; but you'll tell her, Philip, won't you, as I didn't take them things, upon my——" The boy stopped short, and clapped his little hand upon his mouth. "Oh, Steyne! I forgot then! I'll remember!—I'll not say those words—I won't, indeed, when you're gone; but I want her to know it wasn't me, and she knowed nothing about it that night, though she'll not think it was her Bob, I b'lieve; but they'll have told her so."

"Was she ill, then, when they took you?"

"No, no, she wasn't ill—she'd been a-drinking, though——" The harsh cough stopped his words, and strained every feeble limb, as he clung to Steyne, who put his strong arms about him, and bowed over him with the tenderness of a woman.

The paroxysm past, the poor sufferer lay pale and exhausted on the little bed, and Philip knelt by his side. He soothed him, forbade his talking; spoke of his mother's visit in anticipation, of what they had done together, of little things he had taught him, of tales he had told him. The poor boy lay with his eyes fixed upon his kind comforter, who, strong in his charitable deed, even repressed the loud beating at his heart as he heard the cart drive into the courtyard, which he knew was to restore him to liberty. He never moved, but the child's quick ears had caught the sound.

"It's come!—they're calling you—you're going," he said between the painful fits of coughing. "I shan't never see you again—but you'll tell mother—I'll be good—I'll think of all you've told me——"

Tears, which come with softness, that hard childhood had scarcely known; but as the cart jogged slowly across the common, and Philip turned to wave his hand for the last time, the forlorn creature put its thin hands before its face, and, sitting down by the heap of boyish treasures, the last legacy of his friendly protector, sobbed and cried bitterly, "I shall never see him no more—never no more!"

Meanwhile, we will over the common, to catch up the cart of good David Crump, restoring Philip Steyne to liberty and new life.

Crump's cart it is, but not David himself, as he had meant three weeks ago it should be. *L'homme propose*, &c.; and no man's plans could have been more fully laid than had been David's a month ago. He had, after all endeavours failing, so entirely given up the hope of ever finding poor Rose, that he had

trusted to prevail on Philip to do the same, and accept an offer he was prepared to make, of opening a way to fame and fortune in his own trade, and near himself. He was disappointed to find the lad still continue firm in his resolve to prosecute the search himself, regardless of all else ; but, anyway, Crump had settled to have his old favourite with him for the first few weeks of his emancipation, to talk matters over, to start him, if he would go, on his travels in a fitting manner, and above all to make a last effort to keep him near them altogether.

But, see you, great vessels will wreck, and swamp the lesser craft—firms will be bankrupt, and the little children of the workers be hungry—and the cinder fire, and the blanketless bed, and naked toes, teach them betimes a practical lesson, that will chance to stick by them when you shall read abstract truths of how virtue is its own reward here below, to doubting ears.

Secure in the faith of his own honest soul, poor Crump had in an evil hour trusted more than the value of his own labour to the high and mighty showing of the dashing firm in whose speculations he had largely embarked—from his own pocket good cash had been expended to a much larger amount than, for his life, he had dared acquaint Polly with—had anticipated, with pride the lustre to be added to his fame, and the not inconsiderable addition to his means finally to be gained.

As the handwriting upon the wall shook the very soul of Belshazzar's feasters, so the fatal word bankrupt struck to the heart of poor David, when, shivering and shaking like a guilty thing, he hardly dared en-

quire the extent of his loss. Simply *all*—no hope, no prospect, and happily, not the cruelty to keep him long in suspense.

Vain for me to attempt to describe the agony of the poor fellow, sharpened by remorse at the recollection of his own imprudence, by the certainty of an avenger at hand; for Polly was at her mother's at Buxton, but would be home in two days. Serious thoughts of deferring that meeting, as far as this world was concerned, rushed upon his mind. The worst unknown could be better dared than that of which he now felt, alas! he had even yet only tasted in moderation.

But—"the back is fitted to the burden"—"the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb"—there is a law of compensation runs throughout the great plan—or "misfortunes never come alone."—You may put it which way you please.

Mrs. Crump had caught a bad cold; the cold became influenza, influenza quincy. Mrs. Crump lost her strength; worst sign of all, lost her voice. Mrs. Crump survived just long enough to enjoin her heart-broken husband to have her buried in the new churchyard; to let all the children come to the funeral, baby and all—and—as he hoped to meet her in another place—not to have it christened after his eldest sister, whom she could never forgive for not coming to her in her last "trouble"—finally, specially exhorted him not to marry till the youngest should be nine years of age—and so departed, in happy ignorance of the *faux pas* in worldly wisdom made by poor David—who, good fellow, spared her last moments the pang, not perhaps free of a misgiving that had she learned it, she must undoubtedly have rallied and

cheated death, rather than miss so rare an opportunity of fulfilling her mission.

So within a few short weeks was changed the plan of Philip's staunch friend who, true to the last, offered to make him a sharer of his fortunes when, his whilom "angel" deposited in her earthly home, the remnants of his poor belongings gathered together, he yielded to the persuasion of some fellow-sufferers by the smash, and agreed to make one of a party about to found new hearths in Australia.

Of course Philip, with all due gratitude, declined. Crump would fain have come to fetch him away to say farewell, to give him advice, but his hours on English earth were limited, his cash still more so; the care of his young family pressed upon him, the journey was long, the money would do Phil more good. To a friend who had some commissions to fulfil at the town where young Steyne had intended to go, Crump entrusted the charge of a letter, heavy with good wishes, honest love, and kindly warning; heavy, too, with all he could give, more than he could spare, and an earnest wish that, for itself, was worth the reality of such effusions in general.

"God bless you, and keep you what you are."

Such the benison that started young Philip on his travels.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

A GOOD TURN—A WHISPER.

What is a trifle ? In the acorn cups
 Dwell the great ships, the mighty seas that ride ;
 The tiny moth-egg yields the silken web
 That clothes the palace in its purple pride.
 A bodkin point hath let out lordly life,
 A woman's face whole cities brought to grief,
 A slackened shoe-tie gained a man a wife,
 A well-turned limb made "hero" of a thief.

AUTHOR.

THE ideas of the young traveller were changed, since, five years ago, he started on the sea-beach with somewhat of the same project in view. His destination was unaltered, but that was all. In that space of time Philip had learned and had thought much, if, as we have seen, not always with the best result. In his first acquaintance with the forbidden tree, it might be he had plucked of the bitterest fruit, and that the knowledge of evil was now to guide him in his almost hopeless search. From the conversation of boys older, if not in the world, in its ways, he had learned to dread the worst ; and while confirmed in his determination never to relinquish his quest for his lost sister, he had been even more impressed with the probability that in the largest towns, London above all, would that inquiry be best pursued.

Whether experience, too, had led him to put less

faith in the Mr. Plunkett of old than at five years ago, I know not; but that idea occupied a very small space in Philip's plan of action now, if indeed it remained at all. It seemed as though the great conclusion arrived at was, to rely upon himself.

In yet another way had the corrupt source of knowledge been not unfruitful to him. Eagerly he had listened to, and stored up, the sad histories of his unhappy companions, their misfortunes, their wretchedness, their crimes, too often related with a triumphant zest, and pride of superior villany; and Philip had silently noted the recurring fact, almost invariably the same—drink. The parents' or the master's vice—the miserable home, the lax guardianship—drink constantly at the root—the public-house and its meretricious belongings—again and again, the lure, the pitfall, the Judas, the executioner.

I say the lad marked this; and even, though loathing the terrible histories, so much of one fashion, he would, on the arrival of a new inmate, in the hours for relaxation, draw him on to tell his tale, and with nervous eagerness wait for the creaking of the same cruel hinge on which so many of these pitiful child lives turned.

Feeding the fire that already burned at his heart, strengthening the bitterness of those dreadful recollections which each day rather seemed to brand more strongly into his memory, and on which, in the reticence of his nature, he had brooded, till he believed life to contain for him but two purposes—the recovery of the child sister, destroyed, castaway, as she might be; and, second only, but awaiting that—Revenge.

It was late in the day when the cart stopped, and the driver, with a hearty shake of the hand, bade his young fellow-traveller good-bye.

Philip had expressed a wish to stop at this town in preference to going on a few miles further. Crump had furnished him with a recommendation to a relation of his own at the next town, some fifty miles on; but Steyne had learned from one of his late companions some particulars concerning this place, which had determined him on visiting it.

With his small stock of money securely hidden in his boot, having left his bundle at a humble shop where he found he could sleep that night, he made his way to the part of the town so clearly described to him.

Here, amid dirt and noise, vile sights and sounds, poverty so merging into vice, vice so kin to want; charity and justice alike forbear to question, Philip made his way, now lingering by a lamp to catch the glimpse of a passing face, now turning away with a shudder, lest he might indeed see what he looked for.

At one corner, where a gin-shop threw its noisome glare across the road, the sound of a piano and singing arrested his steps. Involuntarily he turned towards the door, his foot was on the step, closely were the ideas associated in his mind, he almost believed he should find her. As he hesitated two young girls almost reeled against him.

"Was you looking for me, my love?" said one, throwing her arms about his neck. The other slipped her arm through his; and while Philip strove to extricate himself without violence, they had dragged him into the public-house.

"Stand off, there, you Sal," said the first, "it's me he's a-going to treat."

"You get out," returned the other, with an oath; "he can treat which he likes—it's me, ain't it, dear?" at the same moment adroitly slipping her hand into Steyne's pocket, which the other perceiving, she flew upon her like a tiger. Philip turned to leave the place, but the girls darted after him, each swearing he had promised to treat her.

"Now, then! rowing again!" said a constable, as the door was thrown open upon the struggling, vociferating trio.

"Take 'em all off, the whole lot," shouted the indignant barmaid. Philip, freeing himself from the unwelcome embraces of the rivals, in a few words explained, turning his pockets inside out, as a convincing proof he could not have made any such overtures as had been attributed to him.

"Well, young man," said the constable, "my opinion is, that if you're as you say, you'd best keep out of such company. There be off, with the pair of you! and don't let me catch you again, that's all!"

With a shake he set free the girls, who took to their heels, the one with a derisive grimace at Philip, the other spitting on his foot as she passed him.

"There ain't one going in, nor coming out o' this house that ain't as black a sheep as is to be found; now that house below there is quiet enough; but take my advice, young fellow, if you want to keep clear of that lot, don't come here."

To such an authority Philip thought it might be well to disclose his purpose, and in a few words he made it known.

"Eh, eh, eh—bless my soul!—why, my lad, you might as well look for a needle in a bottle of hay! And turned five years, you say, and no mark, no nothing. Why you wouldn't know her!"

"Oh but I should, I should know her anywhere, of a thousand."

"You think so, but there's many things to alter a girl in that time—why it might ha' been one o' them very wenches—they're neither of them more than twelve or fourteen."

Philip sickened at the thought.

"No, no, it's just a wild goose chase in my opinion you coming to such a place, my good fellow. If she's here anyway, depend on it she ain't worth the finding, and if she's a clever piece, as you say, she's likely turned to better account."

"What was that music up there?"

"That singing and strumming?—that's the young German that plays for the landlord, he owes him no end of a bill, poor devil, and has taken to play it out. He is a good hand too."

Brief programme of another domestic tragedy.

They had reached the end of the narrow street, and the constable turning back, bade him good night, with a parting piece of advice,—“Now, young man, you advertise, and offer a reward, and all that—but don't you come here a hunting and bothering, take my word for it you'll get no good, not a bit—good night.”

Sick at heart, Philip was fain to acknowledge the hard truth—slight indeed was the chance on which he had come to that den of misery and corruption; but, after all, what were his best chances of success but mere probabilities?

He turned away, and had walked some distance before he found that he had taken a different direction, and was leaving the town by another road. It must be a long way to the place where he had left his bundle and engaged his bed. It was getting late, the roads were deserted, and Philip, who had taken no refreshment since morning, was both tired and hungry.

He retraced his steps for a short distance, and came to a wayside public-house which he remembered to have passed before. With his deep-rooted dislike of such places, he could not prevail on himself to even enquire the way; but having refreshed himself with a draught from a friendly pump a few yards off, he sat down to wait the coming of some passenger of whom he might obtain the necessary directions.

Here he had not sat long, resting his burning forehead against the cold iron, when loud voices from the public-house attracted his attention.

"Now I tell you it's no use! not a bit!—I'm not going to be done in that manner—I've had enough of it! Coming and drinking and eating, and a using of the house, and then think to gammon me with a pack of lies. It won't do, so I tell you."

Philip's instinct told him it was the publican who thus vented his indignation on some unfortunate, whose humble tones he heard in reply—

"Indeed there's no lies—I didn't think it would have run up so, and I haven't called for much, though I own I've been sitting here a good bit, for I was foot-sore, and heartsore too, for that matter."

"Well, *I* can't help that, can I? *I* don't keep house to cure people's hearts, now, *do I*?"

Most fervently the young hearer might have re-

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sponded in the negative to that—but his attention was absorbed in what followed.

"Indeed, I'm sorry enough, from my soul I am, that I stayed, but I'd been down home, hadn't been there, nor heard nothing of 'em for five years, and my wife's gone—the little girl I left her with dead—not a soul remembered me, or cared to—I came right away, and I felt like I could get no further, when I turned in for a rest."

"Well, well, it's a bad job, but it don't pay me, now, do it?"

"I have but the shilling."

"That won't pay three, now, will it?"

"I shall get in to barracks to-morrow night—I will send it you, on the honour of a soldier."

Philip's hand clenched at the loud laugh of the publican. "What's that?" he said, "something rottener than any other body's, I guess. Now, I tell you what I'll do; you leave that 'ere thingummy at your back, and I'll keep it safe and sound till such time as you sends the money. It'll be no mortal use to me, so you're sure I'd sooner see the brass."

"I daren't, indeed. I should get into disgrace."

"What odds to me!" cried the man, now getting furious. "You should know what's in your pocket afore you crams your belly. But, there, it's no good a-talking, if you can't pay, and won't leave what you might, why, the constable must see about it, that's all. Here, Sam!"

"Well, if I must, I must," said the soldier; and as Philip had now approached the door, he could see him, as he proceeded slowly to unstrap the knapsack from his shoulder, where he had just fastened it, after his rest.

Had it been the variest cripple or outcast so circumstanced, it would have altered nothing of Philip's intention; yet I will not say but his feet moved the faster up the steps when he looked at the face of the subject of the dilemma.

He was a sun-burnt haggard man, who had seen good service: his dark hair was grizzled, his face worn and careful, his tall form slightly bowed—the more for the last few hours, maybe, that had added the final straw to the burden. But the publican saw nought of all this. Three shillings was owing to him, and in default of the hard cash, he claimed security. Honest man, who can blame him?

His hand was extended for the case, when Philip laid his upon the arm of the soldier.

"Don't give him that," he said, and he put some silver into the hand of the other, as he stood in silent wonder at the interruption. "Pay him, and don't let him have that."

"God bless you, boy! whoever you are," cried the soldier in amazement; "but I can't take your money, I don't even know your face."

"I know you don't, but you'll take the money and pay him—take it, quick, don't give him that!"

All astonishment, the soldier paid the no less wondering publican, to whom Philip had not even turned his eyes. To him they were all of the one type—the smooth-spoken, white-vested Crichton, as he thrust his pale mother from the door that night, as over that mother's grave the boy defied him five years ago.

"God bless you, and thank you, my lad, again, whoever you are," said the man warmly, taking the boy's

hand as he followed him to the door. "Where will I send the money?"

"You can't send it, I don't want it; I am going away," said Philip, hurriedly.

"Well, but don't run off; see here, there's a trifle left, you'll have something this chilly night."

"God forbid!" said young Steyne, so fervently that all near him looked up, and the landlord retreated a pace within his bar, as one who scents hydrophobia.

"Aye, but you've done me the best turn ever was done me by mortal man, and I can't let you go so, and never, maybe, see you again. Stay; here, my lad, listen! I did say I'd never tell it, but you've done me a good turn, and I've nothing else."

He drew him aside and discoursed for some moments in a whisper.

"It's a sure thing, I know, but I'm off to India. You're young and daring, it'll be a good thing to you one of these days."

Philip laughed. "Thank you," said he; "but you'll serve me more, I expect, if you'll tell me my way to the market-place."

"Ah, that I will," said the soldier; and he walked with Philip to where his road lay straight before him, again thanked him, and shook him by the hand, bidding him not forget. "It'll make your fortune one of these days," said he.

Philip shook his head, and went upon his solitary way. He was thinking of the gin-shop, the alley, the fair young castaways, and of another, whom some day—some day, he was sure—he should find, and had soon forgotten even the cause of the soldier's friendly whisper.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

THE FOUNDRY—TIDINGS.

“ Pile high the fire—let the furnace glow,
While the red molten torrent runs below.”

“ ‘ Dead !

‘ Aye, dead ! we all must die,

‘ And why not he ?

‘ Alas ! my task is o’er—gone, gone for ever ! ”

THE BROTHERS. (*MS. Play.*)

“ No use, my lad, as far as that party’s concerned—been left here these six months and more. There’s a good many would be glad to know where ; but I don’t expect he’s to be found any where just handy ; it’s not likely, I think.”

Such was the answer returned to Philip’s enquiries, when he presented himself one evening, tired out and travel-worn, at the destination of Crump’s recommendatory letter.

It was a foundry, situate in one of the close back streets of the dense manufacturing town, where, by a rambling circuit, with many a halt, and many delays, young Steyne had arrived. His small stock of money was nearly spent, for in the course of his ill-directed, uncertain enquiries, not a few had been the advantages taken of his inexperience and evident anxiety, by those who, while they led him on by delusive hopes made them a source of gain.

Cast down by repeated failures, yet no way turned

from his resolve,* Philip entered the town where he had determined to prosecute his search with somewhat more method than heretofore, and at the same time to procure some employment, to recruit his scanty funds, ere he started for his final destination, London.

He had counted much on his friend's good word to put him on a firm footing with his relative, and here was a sore disappointment. The head of the establishment had quietly taken his departure some months since, under circumstances which rendered it unadvisable to leave any clue to his destination.

It was a stirring scene, the high open building with the glowing fires, the huge blowers, the ponderous machinery, the clang, the din and roar. The swarthy giants moving to and fro from out the dusky shadows athwart the gleam of the furnace, like unearthly assistants at some demon rites, their brawny arms swinging to and fro the masses of metal, and the heavy castings, with a disregard to size or weight, that seemed to set at nought all ordinary human capabilities. .

It was such a novel sight to Philip, he stood for some minutes absolved in the contemplation of the fiery labour. .

There was an attraction for him in the might, and strength, the *reality* of the work ; and when the mouth of a furnace opened, and down came the red hot torrent, and flowed, liquid fire, into the receptacle beneath, the boy's heart leaped at the sight of the 'power that could sway the fierce lurid mass, the very emblem of durability and resistance, moved to pliancy by men's ingenuity and will.

"Lend a hand here! will you, my lad?" shouted a man at a truck which had just lumbered into the yard heavily laden.

Philip sprang up, right willingly, and lent material assistance in quickly unpacking the load.

"Eh! but you're a strong chap, you are," said the man, as young Steyne shouldered a casting he would have put aside for four hands.

"You'll never do it," said the head man, who stood by. "Dashed if he hasn't though! well, upon my word, I haven't seen better than that; he looks but slight too. You'll have a drink of something though, after that, my man."

"No." Philip wanted nothing of the kind, only if he might be allowed just to stop and see them finish that casting. "Stop and welcome."

"Was it work you was wanting in that letter?" asked the foreman, coming up to where Philip stood, after some time had passed.

"I do want work," was the reply. "I can't say what's in the letter, but it was his uncle wrote it, to speak for me, I suppose."

"Ah! I see—you've been used to this?"

"No." Philip was bound to confess he was but an admiring ignoramus.

"Eh, eh, but I might have guessed as much, by your seeming so taken with it,—but it's a pity too. Now, see that man there feeding the furnace; do you fancy you could make any hand of that?"

Philip modestly gave assurance of his belief that at least he could "try."

"Well, so you can do that;" said the good-natured foreman, slapping his thigh; "and you shall too. We

lost a boy here a couple of weeks back—a young scapegrace he was—I said we'd do without better than with, but dashed if I don't give you a trial. I liked the way you stepped out to handle those things just now."

There and then Philip would have given a sample of his abilities, but the foreman would not hear of it. It was Friday night; he shouldn't have such a bad chance as to begin on a Friday anyway. He kept Philip beside him that evening, pointing out the various operations in the process of casting; gave him an idea of the different rules and regulations of the "shop;" and bade him come in the morning to commence his new duties.

Such was the first step of young Steyne in his new independence. That it required no extraordinary exertion of talent, that it afforded no scope for the discovery of any latent genius, may be cause why he succeeded, as he did, in giving perfect satisfaction, in justifying the predilection of the foreman, in overcoming the little jealousies and prejudices against a new comer which can find breathing-room, even in a foundry. Hard matter though, at first; for Philip's principle touched on the tenderest point of the swarthy giants' habits. He would help them in the hottest, heaviest, most vexing of their labours; was ever ready to bear a hand, even in the midst of his own special duties—and his aid was not that which even a Hercules could afford to despise—but he would *not* budge a foot to the adjoining public-house—not even to give the order for the brackish nectar for which these fiery devotees thirsted from morning till night; would pay no footing; would join in no boyish carouse, nor stand treat upon any pretext.

At first, little less than martyrdom seemed likely to be the reward of his staunch adhesion to what was, in fact, the neutral working of revenge. So deep, so fervent, was his hatred of the thing that had struck at the root of all his promised life—so complete his conviction of the undying curse attached to its use, its existence, its very presence—he loathed the houses where it dwelt, its scent upon the air, its written names upon the wall. But his new companions knew nothing of all this, and resented his difference of practice as a tacit assumption of superiority over themselves.

Has it never struck you, by the way, what singular exceptions people make to general rules in the matter of drinking? Now, you might refuse mutton, or beef, or pork, either one—you might make the exception in favour of turbot, turtle, salmon, pine-apple, marmalade, whitebait, or artichokes, to the end of your days—and no more remark would be made than, if your acquaintance wished particularly to compliment you, to remember you “did not like so-and-so”—more especially if the dish be an expensive one. But the moment your dislikes extend to the bottles and decanters, people begin to “wonder if you think you are any better than they.” You may refuse the venison, or turn from the Irish stew, without fear of compromising your claim as but frail humanity; but decline the champagne, reject the porter, dear friends begin to look askance, to think over “what have they been saying?” to wonder if “they can talk before him,” and, in short, to regard you as one who has private reasons for considering himself several notches above mere sublunary perfection.

Again; if I chance to meet my landlady coming from the bootmaker's, the milliner's, or even the butcher's, she seldom fails to make a dead stop, to greet me cordially—hope Sally is attentive—that my cough is better—heard me cough in the night, &c., &c. But, if returning home, rather later, it may be, than usual, a trim little figure pops out of the side-door of a brilliantly-lighted house at the corner of our street, with a smart silk apron thrown with careful carelessness over the hands, there is no stopping to ask about the cold, or what will I take for supper, or if I am tired, or hungry, or anything else. Now, though I may be a stranger of forty-eight hours, the black dress flits before me up the steps, in at the door, and is down stairs before I am on the mat, while any doubts as to my not being known are dispelled by Sally's instant appearance with the candles.

Why is this? Does her mind misgive her that her pretty face and trim widow's cap will appear to less advantage in the doorway of the "Vaults?" or is there anything more to be ashamed of, fetching in a bottle what one wishes to drink, than in a basket what one wishes to eat or to wear?

Anyway, 'tis but scurvy treatment of such an intimate—this disowning and skulking with him into corners, this tacit acknowledging of his disreputable kinship. But it is the same, from the mansion to the foundry.

Be given, then, the more credit to the power of quiet, firm and persistent kindness; which could overcome even prejudice and ignorance, and made young Steyne, in the course of a few weeks, to be, at least, respected by his companions. I will not undertake

to say but he might owe it somewhat to his proved strength and power, so far beyond that usual at his age. On the whole, it was judged prudent to be friendly with one well disposed to be so. His friend the foreman had not deemed it prudent to interfere in his behalf, but saw with satisfaction the course things were taking.

Meanwhile, Philip had abated nothing of his zeal in the great object of his travels, though his efforts were pursued with better chance of success. He had obtained an audience at the head-quarters of the police in the town, at the workhouse, at the infirmary; and though information was readily afforded, and promises given, all was qualified by the declaration of the hopelessness of success at such a distance of time.

But young Steyne was not one of those to be easily discouraged; undismayed, he continued to devote every spare hour in the planning or acting out some new scheme. Present difficulties seemed but the fitting price to be paid for the triumph he felt to be secure.

In London centred all his hopes; the full force of his energies he reserved for the final search in the great city, where, in his own mind, he had laid the scene of his success. Already he counted the weeks that must intervene ere he should have secured a little sum sufficient for the journey; to his friend, the foreman, he intended confiding the purpose in view, and hoped from him to obtain an introduction to similar employment in the metropolis.

His scheme was not badly arranged, and he worked the more cheerfully, and returned at night to his very humble bed, with a heart much less heavy than his purpose lay so clearly defined before him. But

though Fate, slackening at times the tether, seems to slumber at her post, she will but the more hastily assert herself; and, by the sudden curb arresting man's presumptuous career, remind him of her supremacy.

"Rum chap, that!" observed one of the men, as Philip one morning quitted the foundry on an errand for the foreman.

"He'll run his legs off anywhere for you, except to the public. Queer, ain't it?"

"Eh, it is so. I couldn't 'bide the lad noway, at the first, but somehow he comes over one. You can't fall out with him."

"He's a rum un for staring at the girls."

"What! Steyne?"

"Ah! I walked behind him down by the Nunsgate t'other evening, he didn't know it was me, you're sure; and if he didn't look into the face of every girl he met; ah, and when he got to the corner, round into Black Alley, he stood by the gin-shop there, and watched every mortal petticoat as came along."

"Did he speak to any of 'em?"

"Not he, and when one of the wenches stopped right facin' him, he drew himself up and walked away."

"He's a queer one."

"He just is, but he is the right sort for work, and no mistake. I say, Bishop, 'ha ye seen anything of Hinton lately? Is he never comin' no more?"

"Aye, I suppose he is, when he's got the fit past."

"You don't mean to say as he's on the spree still?"

"Aye, but I do, I saw him yesterday mornin' as drunk as a lord."

"He came in last night," put in another. "He

lodges where I do. He said he was just 'done up, and meant to come to work again."

"Seven weeks, aint it, hes been on the drink?"

"Six weeks and three days, he says—he can tell you to a minute, that's the best of it."

The men laughed.

"It's almost a sin to keep on such a fellow, it is so," said the head man, "but what can one do?—he's worth any three at a day's work, if one could but depend on him."

Sure enough, about twelve o'clock that day, in lounged the absentee; shaggier, blacker, grosser, and more brutal even than in the days when poor Cary cooed upon his knee, pinned jasmine in his button-hole, leaned her laughing face against his bull head, and called him her "dear Old Tom."

Tom was popular here too, if we may judge from the fact that he was welcomed with a buzz of approval by the swarthy Vulcans, among whom, even, he was a giant. Something of this, perhaps, might be due to the vision of the pot-boy from the adjoining house, who appeared behind him, bearing a liberal supply of the favourite nectar, which—it being the dinner hour—was largely distributed among his fellow-workmen; for in this manner he was wont to atone for his periodical absenteeism from the foundry.

The health of the donor had been drunk with unanimous honours, and all were inclining an attentive ear to the recital of his exploits during his prolonged debauchery; when the tinkle of a bell was heard, and a little greyhound ran swiftly into the building and through the group of men with Hinton in their midst.

"It's that —— dog again!" shouted the bully;

"sure as I come back that dog follows me, I'll do for un one day, I will so; whar be't gone?"

The men separated; some of them pursued the animal, Tom struck at it; and the terrified creature, darting past Philip, who was just entering, made his escape.

"Curse thee; what did th' let un go for? thee young ass!" was the complimentary adjuration of Hinton, as Philip, not heeding him, passed on to his own work.

"Whose dog is it? I haven't seen it this long while before," said one man.

"It belongs to yon forin' wench, as lives 'longside of my place. She's been away, I reckon; I han't seen her till this mornin'."

"She's a pretty creatur'," said another.

"Hoo's a stuck-up wench, she is," said Hinton. "Winna look at a man, nor gie'n a civil word. I'll do for that beast one day, I will so."

"I lodged in the same house a while since," said one of them; "and that girl, I'd hear her singing—aye, she do sing, and no mistake."

"Them foriners mostly do," remarked a third.

"Eh! talk o' singing," said Tom, who had not been unmindful of himself, in the distribution of the liquor—"talk o' singin', ye should ha' heerd a bit of a lass as I had the care on—eh! a many years ago, now it is!—sing! eh, like a bird, that child would! a wee bit of a creature too, she wur—and dance, eh! Fond o' me too, she wur—could ne'er make enow o' me; greadly little wench! Hoo journeyed wi' me many a mile too. Not that I care for the brats, not I! but, see thee, I owed her father a grudge, and when there

was an honest penny to be earnt, it wur killing two birds wi' one stone, it wur. Eh! but it was a game, it was so."

"Tell us Tom! how was it?" cried the men, crowding round.

"Well, ye see, he, the father, had used to bring her to the public-house o' nights, to dance and sing. He wur nowt, and t' landlord had 'n under 's thumb, see th'—and they brought t' brass to his pocket for sure, they did so—and a young chap, as were there, he'd seen her, and ses he, 'She's a greadly wench, Tom, and if you'll do it for me, I'll mak it all reet.' Eh, but it wur a game for sure; hoo wur spirited away, in a big cloak, and I rid that night twel' mile, wi' the lass afore me,—poor wench, hoo shrieked a bit for her father and brother, but ——" The narrative stopped suddenly, as his own arm violently grasped, and Philip stood before him—panting with excitement.

"Where!—that's my sister!—That's Rose!—What have you done with her? Where is she?"

Hinton stood, for the moment silent with astonishment. Philip actually shook the giant in his grasp, and reiterated his demand.

"You brute! tell me! tell me! you shall! where is she? Let me have her! I know you now—I remember, you are Tom Hinton—it was you stole her then! you wretch! tell me!"

"Fair words, youngster! fair words! Why, if it ben't Steyne's brat, I swear," cried the bully, coolly disengaging the boy's hands, and holding him at arm's length. "So, thee's father didna' cut thee's throat afore he did for himsel'—thee's growed too, youngster."

"Where's Rose? where's my sister? tell me, what

have you done with her?" cried Philip, struggling to free himself from the vice-like grasp.

"Thee canna' mind, maybe, when I axed them very words o' thee's father many a year ago, when I lost my wench—eh, but I swore then he'd rue the day."

"Tell me, where is Rose?" was all the reply. "How dared you take her? where is she, I say?"

"Whar I'd thought thee'd been long ago," returned Hinton—"dead, and buried."

"Dead!" Philip ceased struggling.

"Eh! dead! and a blessed job for them that had the keeping of her. Hoo'd a bad fall, and put out some mortal joint, or bone, or such like, and shrieked hooself fair into th' grave. There's all about it, youngster."

He was watching the face of the lad, as he spoke. It went very pale as he repeated the word, but by no other sign did he give evidence of the agony which rendered him oblivious even of the iron fingers pressing into his flesh.

"That's all, youngster. And when thee wants to ax out at me again, thee munna fly out i' that fashion, or I'll maybe serve thee as I will that beast one day."

He flung the boy violently from him, burst into a hoarse laugh, and walked away to his employment; most of the men having resumed theirs, rather than seem to interfere between the dread Tom and his victim. Stunned, crushed, by the fearful intelligence, so sudden, and unlooked for, the lad mechanically resumed his work.

The words rung in his ears; he heard nothing else, and was fortunately deaf to the scraps of information

concerning his own family history, with which Hinton was regaling his nearest neighbour.

So he worked on, till the hour at which he was released from his duties. In the same stupified state he walked to his lodging, and, sitting down upon his bed, leaning his face upon his hands, he tried to recall what he had heard. Of the truth of it he could not doubt—so plainly avowed, so terribly accounted for.

This then was the termination of all his hopes, his plans, his oft anticipated reunion with the only being belonging to him in the world—all ended here !

He groaned as he remembered all his long indulged hopes, as he realized the terrible truth that he should see no more the little tender sister—sweet, loving, beautiful Rose—tortured, stolen, perished, far from all kind fostering hands ?

Then came the recollection of what had caused it all. Another added to the fearful reckoning.

“It must be ! it *shall* be !” he said aloud, as he paced the room, and clenched his hands fiercely : a time *will* come, when I shall avenge them all. It may be years, it may cost me the toil of a lifetime ; but I can wait, aye, and work too, for that—to be revenged on that accursed man, who has destroyed them all.”

As one fire puts out another’s burning, so the violence of his wrath allayed his grief, and left him only thought for his now sole aim in life.

His first idea was to quit at once the neighbourhood of the ruffian whom he felt his utter inability to punish ; but then came a painful longing to hear more of the sad particulars of poor Rose’s death.

“No !” he said, still pacing his quiet chamber, “though I detest the very sight of him, the sound of

his voice, I must hear all. In his drunken fits he can keep nothing—Yes I will, I'll force myself to stay, till I can hear what hand that other wretch had in the villainy ; and then—oh ! if I starve for it, if I work my flesh from off my bones, I will have revenge.

“ Yes, Richard Crichton ! you shall yet rue the day when you made a weak man your tool, and profited by our ruin and grief ! Dead !—the best—the dearest—dead !—yes, from this day forward I shall live only for revenge.”

How little do we know, even guess, of the workings of the creature we call “self.” Little thought Philip that an occurrence was at hand which, within the next forty-eight hours, was to scatter the substance of his solemn resolution, and open to him a more delightful phase of existence than any of which he had ever yet dreamed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

FIRST LOVE.

"The hallow'd scene is ne'er forgot,
 Which First Love has traced ;
 Still it ling'ring haunts the *greenest* spot,
 In mem'ry's waste.
 'Twas odour fled, as soon as shed,
 'Twas morning's wingèd dream ;
 'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again
 On Life's dull stream." MOORE.

It was the second day from that of Philip's rencontre with the bully Tom : the former had returned to his work, to the surprise of the rest, who had hardly given the lad credit for "pluck" to face his avowed enemy. They now heartily sympathised with him, by many tacit tokens of goodwill, consistent with fealty to their giant boon companion.

Hinton seemed disposed, for the present, to ignore the presence of young Steyne, who pursued his avocations unobtrusively, and a perfect calm reigned—too perfect, indeed, not to herald a storm.

The dinner hour had passed, and Tom, having absented himself rather beyond the usual time, returned, showing symptoms of having indulged just so far as to render him irritable and overbearing. We have seen, some few years back, how he was accustomed to evince these delicate variations of temper, and time had not improved him.

"Now then"—(with an oath, of course)—"who's

been here?—Who's been meddling at th' work—I left it fettled a' reet when I went."

An unfortunate new-comer yielded to an involuntary burst of laughter at Tom's dialect, which was quickly stopped by the clang of a piece of metal, furiously hurled in his direction, by the offended individual, with an anathema against sundry of his members, which had the effect of inducing silence, except for the roar and din familiar to the building.

Suddenly there was a shout, a curse, a crash—and Philip, looking round, beheld Hinton chasing the little greyhound, which had frisked into the foundry, and run—hapless fool!—between the very feet of the drunken man.

The men laughed, and stepped aside, as Tom, overturning everything in his way, rushed in pursuit. The scared animal flew round and round, oblivious of the entrance, involved itself in the intricacies of some lumber, at the farther end of the foundry, and finally sank panting in a corner; whence Tom dragged it, and triumphantly displayed it, grasped aloft in his huge hand, which almost covered it.

The men laughed again, believing it all a joke; but the dog, struggling to free itself, and doubtless pained by the rough grip of its captor, bit sharp into his finger.

He cried out, with an oath; the mirth was redoubled, but quickly changed into a cry of horror, as they beheld the little animal dashed into the mass of molten metal at that moment pouring from the furnace, and which Steyne and another man, stood waiting to bear off to the casting.

The yell of the poor beast, as it touched the liquid

fire, passes all description : but at the instant Philip darted forward, and, with the iron bar in his hand, tossed the creature from its bed of torture upon the ground ; then, running to a pail of water at one corner, he dashed it over the half-flayed animal. Alas !—mistaken mercy !—the poor victim writhed and threw itself from the ground, sending forth cries of agony so piercing, that the rough men turned away, sickening at the sight of such evident torture.

“ Poor devil !—It can’t live, you know ”—said one, as Philip knelt down and endeavoured to ascertain what chance of life remained. “ You cursed wretch ! ” cried the lad, turning upon Hinton with a gesture of hatred, while tears stood in his eyes.

Tom darted upon him, his savage fury needed a victim—his fists clenched, his eyes glared. The lad instinctively raised the iron bar still in his hand, but the men closed in between them.

“ Let him be, let him be ! ”—“ You’ve done enough ”—“ No fighting here ! ”—“ Fair play Hinton ! ”—he’s but a lad”—they all cried ; and Tom found himself for once in the unpleasant minority of one. He walked away, muttering vengeance.

The yells of the suffering beast still rang through the building. “ Better put it out of its misery,” cried an elderly man among them : ere Philip could interpose, he mercifully let fall his hammer upon the agonized little head, and the creature lay quieted for ever.

A woman’s shriek echoed through the foundry, a figure darted in at the open door, and dropped on its knees beside the ghastly remains of the once elegant little greyhound, weeping, wringing its hands.

"My dogue! oh! my littel dogue! oh what afe happen him?—oh my cheri littel Bonbon, my dogue! my dogue!" she cried; then suddenly springing to her feet, she confronted the merciful executioner, who with the rest stood gazing in astonishment.

"You vile, bad man! you—what afe you don to him?—for what you afe killed my own dogue?—cruelle, vilain man!"

She stamped her foot, and raised her little hand. The great fellow positively recoiled before those gleaming eyes. "Them furriners"—he said, afterwards—"one never knows when a knife 'll whip out upon you."

Philip approached, anxious to explain that what she had witnessed was but an act of mercy. With a brief glance the girl seemed to understand she might expect sympathy, and she listened, weeping, while he quickly related how the creature had "fallen" into the boiling metal; and how, to its intense sufferings, death was a release to be thankful for.

"It was my own littel dogue, so long as I had it; it did so lufe me—it did follow me all the day; oh my cher Bonbon! he is dead, quait dead!—is he?"

Kneeling still—her tearful eyes looking up at him, through her long black curls, she put the question. And Philip answered it; and when, still weeping, she would have lifted the shattered thing into her little apron, to bear it away, he interposed, and suggested that evening would be a fitter time, and a box the more suitable receptacle; in short that he would take upon himself to befriend the dead as he had the living.

"And will you bring him to mee?" asked the sobbing voice and the glistening eyes again."

Philip answered that he would. The lithe figure made a graceful reverence, and, with another long look at the dead pet, departed.

Philip went back to his work.

It was late when that ceased for the night; and Philip hurried across a street or two to a small shop which he was wont to patronise in the way of thread, shoe-ties, blacking, and such-like important articles.

He remembered to have seen some boxes in which many of the multifarious articles of trade were supplied to the humble dealer, and had already in his mind converted one of them to his purpose.

A bargain was struck, though not quite so easily as Philip had imagined; for the good woman had, singularly enough, discovered a new value in those boxes, hitherto available only as firewood, and in fact would not have parted with it on any terms to anyone but him.

However, the box was bought, and by the help of a few tools which one of his fellow-workmen had brought to the foundry, for a job of his own, a day or two back, a suitable receptacle was contrived for the canine remains, and Philip started on his walk.

Then it occurred to him, for the first time, that he had never asked where the young girl resided—had not even an idea of the locality.

He tried to call to mind something that might give him a clue; he remembered hearing Hinton say she lived next door to him. That was not much, since he had not the slightest idea where that worthy resided, though it could not be far off. The men were all gone, and no alternative presented itself but to wait till morning.

But Philip had *promised*, and with him that was ever a sacred obligation.

He stood at the corner of the street, pondering, with his burden under his arm, when the door of the "Vaults" swung open, and two men tumbled lazily out.

"Nay, nay, I tell thee," said one, "I dinna care, not I; Tom said it, and Tom'll stick to't, he will; Tom's a good fellow, he is so; he's Lancashire, so am I; he'll stick to's word, will Tom."

"You'll not find him at his place, it ain't likely," replied his equally sober companion.

"Thee come along, and hold thee's tongue, I know th' road."

Away they stumbled, and close upon their steps followed young Steyne. He remembered it in after-life—that journey at the drunkards' heels, bearing the remains of the dead dog beneath his arm. But he thought not of it now. At every period of his eventful life Philip was ever prompt at a charitable action.

Up one street, down another, through the shambles, across the fish-market. A peaceful little street enough where the two men at last stopped, in front of a corner house, and Philip, not waiting to see how their errand prospered, hurrying on to the next, knocked at the door; and then suddenly remembered he did not know even for what name to ask. Just as the awkwardness of the predicament had struck him, the door opened, and he was saved further embarrassment, by the cry of delight uttered by a head that appeared over the bannister, and a nimble figure running down into the passage, cried—

"You afe brought him! you are come—you will bring him up to my room for me—you are so goode."

The old woman who opened the door hobbled away, and the girl closing it, hastened up the stairs. Philip followed with his load.

A pleasant room was that they entered. If the French girl's language be deficient in some expressive words, she certainly had the reality. *Home and comfort*, more tastily set forth, young Steyne had not seen for many a day. The ornaments on the mantel-shelf might be but frail and cheap; and the halo'd saints, in their black frames, lacked something of the type of sanctity or dignity. But all was so neat, so pretty; the gay carpet, fringed by the margin of white boards; the bright irons, with which the jolly fire coquetted; the small round table with its scarlet cloth, the same curtaining the windows; the rush chairs; the neat chest of drawers, on which stood the bright looking-glass and pincushion (covered with rich embroidery)—and which only the eyes of a clairvoyant or a broker could have suspected of being a sleeping apparatus—all united in such a whole of snug pure homeliness as would strike anyone, without entering into details, as it now did the new-comer.

"Will you put him down here?" said the girl, tapping hurriedly a large black cushion that stood at the hearth—"he always lie here."

In silence Philip set down the box. She rapidly uncovered it, and looked at the disfigured remains of her favourite.

"Ah! ce cher pauvre Bonbon!—ah! my pauvre petit chien!—il ne me parlera plus!—he will nevere speke to me no more—nevere, nevere!" She shook

her head mournfully, the tears filled her eyes, and, looking up at Steyne, she laid her hand upon her left side. "He did lufe me so, so—he sleep on my pillowe, he eat of my han—and nevere he go, not so far, (putting out a tiny black boot) without me. Ah! mon pauvre Bonbon, he will nevere lufe me no more! —nevere!—I shall call to him, and he will run to me no more, nevere, nevere."

Again shaking her head, laying her hand upon her side, looking down into the box, then up at the mute listener still standing.

"So long as I afe had him!—he was my ami—my friend. When I wake in the morning, I say the first, 'Bonbon,' and he jump, and run, for lick my face; I say, 'Is it fine day, Bonbon?' and he run to the window, and stan up for see. If I wake in the night, I say soft, 'Bonbon,' and he come, pat-pat, for not wake no one, and lay by my head to sleep. Now, I shall wake, I shall call; but he will not come: he will nevere pat-pat more at the door, he will no more jump upon my knees for hear me sing—ah! he lufe me!—now there is no Bonboq—no lufe—no friend!"

She rose, Philip in silence lifted up the box and replaced the cover. She stayed his hand for a minute, and looked a last farewell.

"It was cruelle to take him from me—he was all— all!" she said, through her tears, pressing both hands upon her breast, as if to suppress her grief, as she turned away. Their eyes met—the next moment the cold passive hands were clasped in his, the wet cheek touched his face, the black curls drooped upon his shoulder, and her sobs died inarticulately upon her lips.

The silence broken, the full heart poured out its sympathy with the grief of desolation it so well understood.

There was no more weeping over poor Bonbon that night.

Poor flayed, crushed victim ! at least you sleep in peace, insensible alike to torture and caress.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

CHÉRIE LESCROQUE.

"Heart, thou wilt grieve no more,
 Darkness is past !
 Storm cloud, and gloom are o'er,
 Peace come at last.
 Fate smiles at length, on
 The web she hath wove,
 Gives one to love me, Heart !
 Some one to love !"

AUTHOR.

A MONTH had passed, and young Steyne was no longer a stranger in the pleasant little room at Queen-street. It took a prominent part in all his day-dreams. The labour of the long hours was lightened by the anticipation of the evening ; when, with a lover's speed, he betook himself to the presence of his beloved.

Oh frailty of human resolve !—oh potency of circumstance !—where are now the vows of vengeance, the dedication of a lifetime !

Scant leisure had young Steyne for such ideas : occupied in recollection or anticipation of the moments when, gazing into the sparkling eyes, listening to the piquant chatter, of Chérie Lescroque, he forgot the Past, and looked not to the Future, his whole life centred in the Present.

Long before that month had gone by, Philip had learned the romantic history of the pretty brunette ;

how her father had been exiled from his country, "for reasons what you call politique,"—his death—the struggles of her young life—her loneliness—had all been related with the broken speech, the *abandon de douleur*, the pretty pantomime of touching helplessness. Like himself, she was forlorn and solitary, appealing for sympathy and love, to a heart yearning to bestow them, and Philip yielded, without a question, to the attraction.

Evening after evening found him a welcome visitor at Chérie's little home. The toils, the annoyances, the hardships of the day, were all forgotten in the sunshine of that smile which greeted him; or as he paused upon the stairs to listen, delaying a fuller happiness in the pleasure of hearing the clear voice of his darling, trilling out some favourite song. What though bully Tom had railed or cursed? What, though work was slack, and wages fallen?—As he made his hasty though careful toilet at his poor lodging, as he pictured her look, which in a few moments he should meet, as he rehearsed involuntarily all he would tell her—did he bear one grudge against Fortune or humanity? His fare might have been of the scantiest, his limbs ache with cold, his bed hard as the floor; but did he envy the wealthiest? What noble would he have changed places with, when, kneeling at her feet, her long black tresses showering upon his head and shoulder, he heard again and again the assurance in that broken speech, dearer to him than music: "Yese, Philippe, you are my ami, so very deare and goode." The king upon the throne might envy him, he thought; for had he not Chérie?—Sweet, dear Chérie—was she not his?—his only?

Mine own!—how jealously the god clings to this first condition!—this test of the reality of his empire—how imperatively rejects the shadow of another's right or claim—*mine* alone!

How the white teeth glistened, how the bright eyes danced, as she laid down that everlasting embroidery, and extended her hands at his approach. In her tasteful attire and coquettish head-dress she was pretty to any eyes—to the young lover earth never yielded vision half so fair. How she loved him!—How gracefully she accepted his humble offerings—pure as they were, how much she made of them. The ribbon, the bracelet, the smart apron—unworthy of her as he knew they were—how her eyes sparkled, and her broken accents extolled the goodness of “*Ce cher bon Philippe.*”

He, poor lad, had, not unlikely, half-starved himself for a week to make the offering upon the shrine of his deity, who smiled graciously upon all, even to the dainty pâtés and choice fruits, with which, in default of more costly gifts, he was wont to deck her little tea-table; and to do the pretty Lescroque justice, she made no secret of how she enjoyed these bon-bouches, which her devoted admirer made but a pretence of sharing.

Reward enough for him, to sit at her feet, (upon the cushion of poor Bonbon defunct,) to watch the progress of her swift fingers covering the delicate muslin with the flowers and leaves of her own ingenious devices—to listen to her sweet broken talk—to guess at the meaning of sentences in her native tongue: and make attempts at it himself—to be encouraged, chidden, and corrected by his laughing instructress—often to sit in silence, even happier perchance to steal a hand and

hold it imprisoned—till the owner ransomed it upon his own terms, then used it for his chastisement.— Ofttimes looking back upon his life and all its hardships, he would say, with tears in his eyes—“I would suffer it all again, Chérie, to have your love—dear, beautiful Chérie !”

“You are my goode Philippe,” was the reply : “you are so kind, you nevere forget bring me quelque chose—”

“But you love me, Chérie ; you’d love me if I couldn’t bring you anything ?”—asked the eager lover, holding one of her hands.

“Assurément qu’oui !—oh !—je t’aime toujours mon Philippe—there, you learn that now—n’est ce pas ? you comprehend me ?

“Yes, yes, I understand you quite, darling—”

“Let me then now—allez—let me go ; you see, I must put this in the cupboard, then I shall take home this work—”

And with a long kiss upon it, the hand was let go.

These walks, to take home Chérie’s work, were welcome events.

The bazaar for which she was employed in embroidering collars, sleeves, vests, and handkerchiefs, was quite on the other side of the town, and Philip enjoyed the duty of being her escort. His heart swelled with pride, his head was more erect, as her arm rested upon his, as he charged himself with her parcel. How carefully he guided her steps, how shielded her from contact with the rougher passengers, how courteously bent his ear even to her slightest remark. In those days beat the heart of a true gentleman under that coarse jacket of thine, Philip.

On such occasions their return would be late ; he was never permitted to enter the house. Chérie always insisted on parting at the corner of the street, though he would watch in shadow, till the door had closed upon her, and then hasten to his poor lodging and hard bed, glorifying all time and fate, that had sent him such a blessing.

Pretty Chérie punctiliously observed a fixed hour for her lover's departure. There was no clock within hearing ; but the sons of the old woman who kept the house came in at a certain time, and the clumping of their boots and the odour of their pipes gave the signal. Ten minutes were allowed for farewell, and off Philip must go.

Meanwhile he had not stood still at the foundry. Better work and better pay he now got ; and, to add to his comfort, Tom Hinton had taken his departure with a final blessing, in his own peculiar style, upon young Steyne, and a hope they should meet again.

Tom had got a start in life, so he hinted—found patrons in some branch of art more lucrative than any he had yet put his hand to.

With visions of happiness came reminiscences of old acquirements, and a strong wish to render himself more worthy of the prize he had obtained. Philip stole two evenings during the week, from his heart's worship, to attend the evening classes, held for young men at the Mechanics' Institute in the town. His friend, the foreman, had procured for him the use of the library belonging to it, and many a volume was carried to the little home in Queen-street, there to be read, expounded, and explained to his queen.

None of the deepest or most edifying, doubtless,

were these volumes, and more enjoyed by the reader than the listener, who would too often interrupt the "bon Philippe" with a yawn, a request to wind off a skein of silk, or an enquiry as to the time.

The eyes of the belle Lescroque never sparkled as when she had, by dropped hints and wishes, induced him to take her to the one theatre the town boasted—where, decked in every atom of available splendour, the pretty girl, seated as conspicuously as was possible, gave herself up to the double enjoyment of the evening—the seeing and being seen.

Truth to say, Philip was totally out of his element in such a scene, it was a sacrifice of his own comfort and wishes; but what would he not have sacrificed, to call up that grateful "Oh! merci, mon cher ami"—and that glance of Chérie's blue eyes? Could he foster tastes or wishes which she did not share? In one solitary particular only did he take a stand not to be shaken.

"Eh que c'est drôle!"—cried Chérie one evening "and, mon ami, tu n'aime pas l'eau de vie?"

"No, Chérie, dear one, and I would not for the world you did. Ah! I am sorry to see that on your table. Do put it away, love."

"Eh mais!—but why?"—asked the girl, standing before the table, on which appeared a more luxurious spread than ordinary, in honour of her fête-day. "You do not take the bière, nor no things of the sort?"

"No, love, I'll tell you why, I'll tell you—only put it away, or let me throw it through the window."

"Eh! mais, non!—no, no! one might be ill—that would be wicked—"

With a little pout she removed the small bottle of French brandy, which she asserted had been left since her father died, and with which she had intended celebrating her fête.

The pout was not put away with the liquor, the pretty trifle, which her young lover presented her with, hardly sufficed to banish it; but when the table was cleared, and Philip had taken possession of his constant seat,—holding both her hands in his, looking up into her lovely face—he told her briefly something of his sad history.

The blue eyes filled with tears, over the fate of “*cette chère petite* ;” and as his voice faltered in conclusion, she drew his head towards her, she caressed it with her soft hands, she laid her face to his—“*Mon pauvre ami, my goode, deare, poor Philippe*”—she said soothingly. The next moment she was singing, oblivious of her tears and the cause.

“Bon, I will sing to you ; I will not work to-night ; it is my fête. Do you like that ?”

Like it ! What had he done to deserve it ?—was a thought that often crossed his mind, while his very soul floated in the melody of her sweet voice, or he watched the lithe movements of her graceful form as it flitted hither and thither—so fair a creature given for his own.

“What should I do without you, my Chérie ? You are my world, my life”—he would say.

“You will always love me, beautiful darling that you are : won’t you ?”

“Oh yese, truly, my Philippe, I will—I shall nevere forget to lufe you—nevere—nevere !”

So sped those precious days—so flew the time ; and out of the happy Present he began to shape a Future yet more blissful.

He had always worked hard, now he slaved. Over-hours, odd jobs—at the houses of those who looked encouragingly upon his efforts—every moment was employed ; and every penny hoarded, with the rigour of a miser.

Fewer presents found their way to Queen-street now, but Chérie knew his hopes and wishes ; she certainly could pardon an omission founded on so good an excuse.

Those days of willing labour—those nights of deep repose, or dreams of more than waking happiness ! Those visions of a coming time, that should crown with success all his hopes, unite every condition of mortal felicity, and make him of all mankind the happiest !

What now were revenge, retaliation, to him ?—where buried all the gloomy images of the past ? Vengeance was not for him, basking in the sunshine of the Creator's best gift. Rather he felt he had not suffered enough to render him deserving of the boon.

Sneer, you who remember not seventeen, and its trusting faith. Sneer you, who know not the want, who measure not the value—through all time and age—of one loving heart. Your sneers will not move us, nor our belief harm you. You have your beef and your broadcloth, your blankets and your bargains—sufficient to your existence.

Golden bridge of hope !—rainbow-hued, gemmed with mercy and with peace, spanning Life's troubled

stream, shedding soft light into its gloomiest depths, lifting above shoal and whirlpool the rapt wayfarer, who hears but music in the roaring of the waves, and smiles in the face of the hurtling blasts.

"*I love you !*" marvellous utterance, which—by look, by smile, by tone—hath power to raise that structure, of all that is earthly, nearest Heaven !

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

BROKEN.

" Yet those eyes look constant still,
 True as stars they keep their light ;
 And those cheeks their pledge fulfil,
 Of blushing always bright.
 'Tis only on the changeful heart
 The balm of falsehood lies,
 Love lives in every other part,
 But there alas !—he dies !"

MOORE.

It wanted a week of Christmas. The visits at Queen-street had been necessarily broken in upon of late, young Steyne having been recommended by one of the men to assist at some preparations for a public festival in the town. The job was a lucrative one, and after taking counsel with his fair one, who most readily acceded to his proposal, he accepted it.

There was another cause too, just now, for his less frequent visits. He had a small project on hand, a secret even from his beloved Chérie, so long as the result was undecided.

Prizes had been offered by the Institute in various branches of the studies pursued by the classes. Philip had resolutely worked, and denied himself many an hour of sleep, to qualify himself for entering the lists.

Well he knew it would be useless to aspire to any of

the higher honours, competing with young men who had found leisure and opportunity to cultivate those talents which he felt he did not possess.

He contented himself with one of the second class ; but, the goal once fixed upon, he made up his mind to win.

He had been remarkable, during his school experience at the reformatory, for a certain aptness at arithmetic ; more by intuition than by application of the rules ; and that he selected for his present trial.

Hard trial, as it ever is to those more accustomed to labour of hand than of head ; but Philip had that inducement to success we have at some time felt to be potent with us all—the desire to distinguish ourselves in the eyes of the woman we love.

The evening came ; the names were called ; the prizes were distributed. Philip received his, with a well merited encomium from the chairman of the meeting, who had been informed of the difficulties over which he had triumphed.

His heart beat high with honest pride. He constrained himself to receive with decorum the handsomely bound volumes, and to leave the building steadily.

Once clear of it, the stones seemed to fly beneath his feet. He ran, he bounded over all obstacles in his path. At the market he stopped ; he must take his girl a winter bouquet ; something to mark the evening of his triumph. Then on he flew again.

How proud, how delighted she would be ! She did not expect him, for this was class-night generally. He should surprise her !

Turn the corner—what, if she should be out ! He

glanced up at the window—there was a light—she was in, solitary in her little home—thinking of him most likely—never expecting him !

By no means !

The secret of the street door he knew ; to all initiated it opened by a handle.

He went in, closed it softly, to surprise her. Hark ! she was singing her favourite song ! Sweet Chérie, in absence she recalled him thus ! He lingered, as he crept softly up, hushing his breath to listen.

But what !—ha !—the second verse is taken up by another voice—a man's ! The two join in the last, and the ardent words of the song receive new meaning from the impassioned tones !

It was ended. Philip moved across the landing—opened the door.

Upon the little table were the remains of a “*petit souper recherché*,” as Chérie would have said ; the bottle of French brandy stood, almost empty, in the midst.

One arm upon the mantel-shelf, in front of the blazing fire, lounged a young man, “fast” in his attire and appearance generally ; and though not handsome, by no means wanting in attractions personal, which a profusion of jewellery perhaps enhanced in the eyes of the young girl, whose head leaned upon his breast, whose eyes and lips smiled up to his, a lock of whose ebon hair he caressingly entwined about his fingers.

So Philip beheld *his* love, his *own*, his pure, sweet, loving Chérie.

“*Ecorché, écrasé*” (flayed, crushed) “he was, my pauvre Bonbon !”—she was saying—“ah qu'il

m'aimait ! he did lufe me, my poor Bonbon !" and the hand went to the too tender heart.

" Fudge ! a dog love you !—did he love you like that ?"

O God ! could it be ! but yesterday he had called those lips so pure, had vowed his life to her upon them !

" So you love me as well as ever, you tormenting little devil ?"

" Oh ! si je t'aime ! I lufe you of all the worlde ! I afe nevere lufe no one but you ; nevere, nevere—"

As she threw her arms about his neck, a sound caused both to start and look round.

With a shriek Chérie hid her face in the waistcoat of her supporter, who demanded loudly " what the — *he* wanted ?"

Ere he had finished the sentence, the intruder was gone, the door was closed—Philip had looked his last upon the fair Lescroque.

Straight to his lodging he walked. I cannot tell you how — do any of us know how it is, the body acts at times wholly independent of will or direction of a guiding faculty ? He no more thought, or reflected, or reasoned, between the closing of that door and the opening of his own, than does a person in a faint. In truth it is a mental faint, the object suffering even more, that his body has not succumbed. A merciful provision maybe, by which the deadened mind fails to receive in all its acuteness the sharp stab of the first agony.

He was sitting upon his bedside, his face upon his hands—at his feet the prize books, and the winter nosegay,—when the scene slowly returned to him, as he had beheld it,

His girl—his *own* Chérie ! There was the sting ! All the sting of betrayed *first* love. By-and-by we begin to admit other possibilities, we grow liberal, we learn wisdom.

It was not wounded vanity, nor anger, nor jealousy, that shook this sturdy frame, and brought forth those groans of anguish.

He pitied her as for a misfortune, he could have wept with her, have mournfully asked her *why* she had so done ?—he could not have hurt her, even by a harsh word—but he could never have looked upon her more.

How many noble hearts have so bled away the truest and the purest current of their nature ?—how many felt through life the dull smart of the long-healing wound ?

Again I say—Women, you underrate your influence !

It was well he was alone. A friend, at such a moment, charged with the commonplace scraps of comfort and exhortation, would have gone far to rout the poor file of dismayed and scattered senses, which Reason was stoutly rallying.

Few are they, who know the futility at such times of all consolation, and leave it to the slow but efficient ministry of that which alone can bring it, even partially.

For why ?—these parrot-tongued comforters ! Can they undo reality ?—make what *is*—*not* ! or lull cold Truth asleep by soothing sedatives, that she may wake more loudly restive, more harsh and bitter, than before ! As well might the chimes of yonder clock-tower, jingling out their pleasant music, think to cheat us of the flight of Time—the hands move on, the hour *will* strike.

No one was near, to see the big tears that fell in slow drops upon the books and winter flowers, at his feet. But they stopped, and the last moan passed his lips, as they closed firmly, as he rose, struck a light, and lighted a candle.

He unlocked a small box, took out, one by one, some trifles which, till the last hour, had been much to him. A lock of jet black hair, a knot of scarlet ribbon, a piece of biscuit, a watch-guard, a tiny note in French—(He remembered how he had sought out a dictionary at the library, had translated that note, and triumphantly read it to her in the evening)—a playbill and a—ha! a little bell—poor Bonbon!

A handful of shavings was in the grate, he held the candle to them, and, as they flared, upon them in a heap he laid all that had been so carefully locked away. Upon them the books, the winter nosegay; and, as the flame played round and darted in among them, and mockingly caressed and licked each with its fiery tongue; he pressed the mass down with his foot, and watched, till the last spark died out; and left only the blackened shrivelled covers of the books between the bars.

Then he turned away, extinguished the candle, and threw himself upon the bed.

So we bury the dead of the Past; but how shall we lay the ghosts that will rise from their ashes!

Up and down, to and fro, that little chamber. He had taken off his boots not to disturb others beneath: no other portion of his dress did he remove. To and fro, then upon the hard cold bed, then up again, unresting. The late winter morning broke and found him sleepless.

By its first light he began to arrange his dress. A piece of paper, all that remained in the now open box, caught his eye; he took it up, and his face grew more sad, as he read the words pencilled on it,

"I had forgotten that too," he said to himself. "Everything! for her, everything forgotten and neglected. I might think I was punished for putting them aside, that I'd sworn never to forget. And yet, oh God! I trusted to the loveliest and the kindest of thy creation! Is there none to be trusted or put faith in! no justice, nor truth, nor faith, upon earth? Are the right-meaning always to suffer?—the bad always to triumph?—nothing, nothing, but the old story! Poor little Bob! I promised so faithfully to see his mother. More than a year ago. God forgive me!"

He put the scrap with the address into his pocket. One look he gave, round the old room, cold and empty now, as by the desertion of a visible presence.

A bundle in his hand contained his few extra clothes. He went straight to the house of the foreman, his friend, and told him just what was necessary of his story.

Trouble had come upon him, he said, he could not stay at the foundry, not if he had to forfeit a week's wage, or more. The little sum which had accumulated in the hands of his friend, he now begged to have given up to him.

"Nay, no wage will you forfeit Steyne, my lad," said the good man, as he added that to the store. "Sorry enough I am to lose you, goodness knows—I see how it is, but it's no use talking, I know. What must be, must, I expect; so good-bye and God bless

you. You'll not come in for a bit of breakfast? Well, good-bye, and luck be with you."

Philip asked him as a favour to take charge of the rent for his lodging, and to send it. He could not re-enter the house again. He panted to be away. Brave heart it was, that held the burning iron to the wound unshrinkingly, nor shirked the painful remedy.

By nine o'clock he was out of the town, upon his journey.

The spell was dissolved, the bridge had broken, and he once more breasting the chill waters, swallowing the salt brine, of Life's stern reality.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

THE CARAVAN.

"Adversity makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows."

It was a bitter night. Across the open fields and commons the wind howled and roared, spending its fury on empty space, or, like an enraged tyrant, stooping to vent its passion on the meanest. A donkey's tail, or the barest branch of a meek pollard, alike failed to escape.

Coming upon the outskirts of a dreary waste, over which it had swept unhindered, it lulled as if in speculation upon what manner of object it had lighted on.

The inspection was a brief one ; then the enquirer set himself to test the capabilities of his new discovery.

He howled down the short chimney, he puffed at the small firm-set windows, he roared at the door, and shook it mightily, crept under, raged round, and over, tried every corner. The humble fabric stood quiet, made but little sign, and the petulant blast swept on, with a parting scoff at two large-limbed scant-tailed quadrupeds browsing hard by.

"Cuss the smoke, then !" growled an angry voice, as the speaker looked up from a dirty paper he was

reading, by the light of a fire, considerably flustered at that moment by the sudden attentions of the fitful element without.

"It's the wind"—said a woman, who, on the other side, the stove was engaged upon a mysterious looking garment.

"I know it's the wind; confound it! there it comes again."

"It'll burn clear in a minute, Jem," observed the woman, as she stirred the fire, which, sending up a volume of flame, dispersed the smoke, and threw a bright glare upon the interior of the tenement that had puzzled Inspector Boreas.

Heterogeneous enough to have puzzled any beholder was the display comprised within those four walks.

Of the ordinary articles of furniture there were a table and two chairs; in one corner stood a press, from which protruded the corner of a coloured quilt, inducing more than a suspicion of its double purpose. Upon it were piled sundry articles of crockery, a couple of battered candlesticks, a much used hair brush and comb, a pair of soiled stockings, and a loaf.

On the floor, near the stove, lay a pair of man's boots, well worn and muddy; into them stuck carelessly a couple of tiny buff leather slippers, and across a chair-back hung more of the same articles, which had apparently undergone some cleansing process.

A tub of water was in one corner, a pail of coals in another; across a third hung a curtain of dark stuff: here and there upon the floor lay a cap, a knife, a knot of dirty ribbon, or a tinselled flower; the walls were hung with bits, bridles, huge-cushioned saddles, soiled fleshings of silk and leather, and gaudy fillets

for the head. Upon a rude screen, which shut out the door from the room, were crossed a couple of whips, two fencing swords, and a pair of cymbals.

Order could not at any time have been the presiding genius of this strange abode. Not a thing but appeared subverted from its original purpose. The fire was stirred with a stick, a broken plate was the shovel. A dab of butter stood in a mug, a saucer contained treacle; from a battered pewter pot, under the table, a red herring projected its brittle tail; a lump of soap had taken the place in the basin of the sugar, which, in a brown paper on the table, offered every temptation to peculative fingers. The woman sat on a ragged cushion, the man on an old box, leaning his back against the chair, upon whose seat was a pewter pot and pipe; the other chair had been transferred to the table, apparently to make room for the gambols of two lithe-limbed mortals, of some two and a half feet high, who growled and kicked, and wrestled, amid suppressed bursts of laughter, in the furthest shadows of the apartment.

The woman stitched, and the man pored upon his paper, till a sudden influx of smoke caused him to burst out with an oath—"Where the —— is that fellow got to? why don't he come with them candles? Now then! you young varmint! what are you up to?" he exclaimed, as a crash and rattle gave token of some disaster.—"What are you up to now?"

"It was Alb did it."

"Oh Tuk, it was you."

"It wasn't!"

"*Bless* your eyes both on ye!—if you don't come out o' that!—where's my whip?"

There was a skeltering to gain the ambush of the screen, whence an eldrich face peered forth, the minute after, saying—

“It's on'y the tamb'rines, there ain't nothink broke—father, there ain't nothink broke.”

A growl were the only answer, and the giggle and scuffle were renewed in a more subdued measure.

“Here comes Colly!” exclaimed the woman, as a sound was heard of some one ascending the steps outside.

“A'most time. Who the deuce is he a talking to?”

The screen was pushed aside, and admitted a man considerably under the middle age, yet wrinkled, scant of hair, tall, yet bent, not ill-featured, yet pimply faced and feeble eyed. An old young man.

“Cold night—bitter”—he said, shambling to the table, unpacking his purchases, and unheeding all the oaths that were lavished on his delay.

“Raw night”—he repeated; as, having lighted a candle, he approached the stove, rubbing his hands.—“Smoke—don't we?”

“Ah! we just do—we've been a'most suffocated.”

“Who was you speaking to, Colly, outside?” asked the woman.

“Oh! ah! a poor chap that's missed his way, and come about two miles out of the road. He's a decent fellow, Skurrick: I thought you wouldn't mind; he can have part o' my supper, and there's plenty of straw in the box yonder.”

“Where is he? bring him in. Never see such a chap as you are, Colly, upon my life I believe you can't say, ‘no.’”

Perhaps no one living had better reason for that

belief than Mr. Skurrick himself; to whom poor Colly's little capital, some five years back, had been of such essential service as to render permissible his present station in the establishment, and cause his superior to hold venial any small liberties like the present.

From the screen he again emerged, followed by a young man, whose worn and travel-stained attire, pale face, and haggard aspect, would have moved to compassion many less subject to the vicissitudes of Fate than they who now gave him a rough welcome.

Skurrick rose from the box where he had been sitting, and, pushing it with his foot, bade him come to the fire.

Which the new-comer gladly did, the woman making ample room, and stirring the coals, so as to throw the cheering warmth upon the blue-cold hands and ill-clad limbs. Then she continued her stitching, pausing at intervals to glance into the pale yet remarkable face, where Nature and Reason had held a ruthless conflict, and left the battle-field wasted and desolate.

During weeks of fevered pain and bodily prostration Philip had been thrown among strangers. His small stock of money had melted by lawful and unlawful means. For his last meal and bed he had parted with the second coat he possessed, and on this dreary night, plodding along the London road, in the darkness, he had missed his way and wandered to the village street; where Charity met him, in the guise of poor tippling Colly, and warmed and fed him.

"There!" said the woman, throwing the garment on which she had been employed, to one of the twin

elves, who had been squatting behind the stove, looking at the stranger, and mouthing at each other—"take them to Beauty, and see if they'll do. Now then for supper."

She rose, and began sundry preparations for that end. The elf snatched up the garment, disappeared behind the curtain, and almost immediately returned.

"All right," said he.

"What's she doing?" asked his mother.

The elf, for answer, flourished one hand round his head, and with the other made a sign of sewing.

"Will she have some supper?"

He disappeared again for a minute, then returned—"She don't want any."

"Let her be, let her be," said Skurrick, as he laid down the paper and drew up to the table. "If she enjoys her sulks, let her keep 'em."

"It's her leg," said the elf, appropriating a cold sausage.

"You didn't ought to lash her to that extent, Jem," said the woman: "the wale's as thick as my finger."

"She shouldn't put me up, then. She's a out-and-out devil, when she likes. She might ha' been foaled by that other infernal brute out yonder. What to do with her I don't know! Where's Lettie?"

"Asleep: she was tired."

So they gathered round the table, all except the stranger, to whom Skurrick's better half, with kind consideration, handed his portion, as he sat silent by the stove. She took care, too, that Colly's plate was no less supplied for the mouth he had introduced to share their meal.

"Chilly, ain't it?" said the latter, rubbing his hands, and approaching the stove, when he had finished. "You'll ha' felt it too—ill and that, you say, —be glad of a drop of something short, *he* would, *I* dessay mother."

"You and your drop," said the woman, laughing; "you'll find a excuse for that in every mortal thing as is:" and no way reluctant herself, she reached down a stone bottle from the highest shelf of a small cupboard, and pouring a tolerable portion into a tea-cup, handed it to Colly, who courteously passed it to Philip.

"You won't!"—was the exclamation, as it was at once refused. "Well! blessed if I don't think you're the first as ever I see put it back. Why, its as good a drop of the best sort as ever you tasted. But here's one won't say no"—and he tossed it off.

The woman meanwhile helped herself, and administered lesscopious drams to the weazen elves, who buzzed round her, petitioning, till their father thrust them on one side, and proceeded to refresh himself from the bottle; pushing the pot from which he had previously been drinking towards Philip.

"Like that better?" said he.

Steyne declined, but thanked him.

Skurrick looked at the stranger, whose abstinence was a puzzling rarity to him. He dropped a few remarks about its being a raw Easter—bad for fair-time; enquired Steyne's destination, and learned it was London.

"We shall work our way up there, I expect, but not just yet awhile. Going to Brookford now, for the great fair, you know."

"I tell you what it is, Colly," he said, raising his voice, "if Busby don't come up soon, I shall go on. It's too bad; the girls ain't half up in this new business, and how am I to get 'em on without the rest, I'd like to know—" He stopped short, as a violent noise was heard at the end of the caravan, apparently in another compartment.

"There's that born devil, at it again!—she'll smash the place in one o' these days! Curse my head that ever I was fool enough to be bothered with her!" He snatched the candle from the table, and went out, followed by Colly.

The stamping and kicking continued—there was a cry, as of an animal in pain, then all was still.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

"Thou mightier than Manoh's son, whence is thy great strength,
And wherein the secret of thy craft, O charmer charming wisely ?

* * * * *

There is none enchantment against Beauty, Magician for all time,
Whose potent spells of sympathy have charmed the passive
world ;

Verily she reigneth a Semiramis, there is no might against her,
The lords of every land are harnessed to her triumph."

MARTIN F. TUPPER.

IN a few minutes the men re-entered ; Skurrick in a mood the reverse of pacific, and which rendered advisable the hint given by his better half, to the effect that they should at once retire for the night.

The movement was generally adopted ; Philip following his conductor, Colly, out of the caravan by one door, to re-enter what appeared to be only another compartment of it, appropriated to the accommodation of horses, though it was at present empty.

"Can you make a shift to sleep here?" asked Colly, setting down his lantern. "The straw's clean, and plenty of it ; here's a rug too. I always sleep only too sound,—it's just use."

"Never fear," returned Steyne : "If I don't sleep here I shouldn't anywhere. How or where I should have found my bed to-night, but for you, I don't know ; so I ought to be thankful."

"Not a bit ; not a bit : as long as we can help one another, why its only just fair—nothing more, as I can see. Let's have a peep at that wild beast."

He set his lantern on a ledge high in the wall, and, turning a pail upside down, raised himself to the level of a small opening in the partition.

"Ah, you brute you!"—said Colly, shaking his head—"you vixen!—such a lovely creatur, too, to look at."

"What is it?" asked Steyne—"a horse?"

"Aye, a horse it is, possessed by old Harry himself though, I think. You heard all that row just now; but that's nothing to what she'll do at times; she'll bite and fight at you with her fore-feet, like a Christian. Take a peep?"

He jumped down, and Philip, who was taller, availed himself of a lower standing-point.

Looking through the opening, he beheld, in a similar box to that they were now in, a horse, lying upon a plentiful allowance of straw. As far as he could make out, by the dim light of a lantern, it was a splendidly formed animal, and Philip who (true to the meaning of his Greek nomenclature,) had a natural affection for the species, looked with admiration on its visible points of superiority.

"What ails the creature?" said he, looking round to Colly; "it's panting and shivering as if it had a fit."

"Lor bless you! we're obliged to do any mortal thing to quiet her, when she's in them tantrums; Skurrick's fit to knock her brains out many a time."

"How did he get her?"

"Swopped her for one he had—a pretty creature to look at, but no good to him, weak in the knees. I can't think how they came over him: they never would, but he'd been taking a drop more than was good for

him. And now this thing, you know, she just eats her head off, and 'll never pay him in dog's-meat."

"No, no ; not so bad as that," said Philip : " she's a splendid creature—not so bad as that surely."

"You'll hear by'nd-bye, when she comes to a bit."

Colly was soon snoring ; but Philip sat up, covering his shoulders with the rug, and laboured to recall some long-past occurrence, some old reminiscence, stowed away, behind much subsequent accumulation, in some nook of the universal storehouse. Slowly he recalled circumstance, time, words ; until suddenly, from out the dust and lumber, stood that he sought, a clear and perfect whole.

At last he slept, and was awakened, soon after daybreak, by the plunging and snorting of his unruly neighbour.

"Hear that pet ?" said Colly, who was performing a primitive toilet, by plunging his head in a bucket of water, and scrubbing it with a piece of bed-tick : "that's how she'll go on, till we can't bear it no longer."

"Don't do anything with her now, will you ?" said Steyne. "I want to speak to —— what did you call him ?"

"The gov'ner ? Skurrick, Jem Skurrick. Do anything !—bless your heart, I wouldn't go nigh her for a gallon of Hollands, not I ! You'll come in as soon as you 're ready, you know."

So saying, he went out ; and Philip mounted to the point of observation, whence he bestowed some thoughtful consideration upon the inmate of the adjoining tenement, who was champing, snorting, and

otherwise demeaning herself in a manner quite unworthy of her sex.

He then quitted his bedchamber for the fresh air of the heath. At no great distance he saw stationed another caravan, rather smaller, but of greater pretensions to appearance, than the first. An arrival had taken place in the night; the two proprietors stood in deep conference together a few yards off. The newcomer, Busby, was short, broad, and puffy. Mr. Skurrick was above the middle height, well made and wiry in form, his sallow face marked slightly with small-pox; he had keen black eyes, underneath which the skin hung loose and baggy; his thick jet hair cut close to his head; his dress an odd mixture of the groom and "gent." In his hand the never-failing whip, the thong of which he caressed incessantly, with the fingers of the other, as might a lover the tresses of his beloved; occasionally threatening with it the legs of his elfin offspring, who played their pranks about him, and who inherited with laughable exactitude their father's features; even to the corkscrew honours, for which in past times he had been remarkable.

"Go in and get some breakfast, do," said Colly, as he busied himself in his morning duties with the horses. "Mother's in there; go on."

Philip ascended the steps; the woman welcomed him kindly, and set before him the hot tea, and bread and butter, she had reserved for him.

She was bustling about the dwelling, when a child hurried up the steps, and, running to the woman, put her arms about her, and began to cry.

"He says I must do the Star-ring, and I can't

mother, I know I can't! Last time I fell, and he beat me: I'll do anything but that—"

"It's no good coming to me, dear; you know if father says so—"

"I shall fall, I know! I hurt myself bad last time. I can't do it! Oh mother!"

At that moment Skurrick entered, whip in hand.

"Now, Sarah, don't be a fool!" he cried. "It's no use you smothering the child up there—she's got to do it, and that's enough."

"I ain't hindering her, Jem. Lettie dear, you must go," said the mother, loosing the little hands.

She lifted up a thin childish face; she was not above ten, and very small and light of her age.

"I can't, father," said she, weeping; "indeed I *can't*! I'll do anything else, but I get so afraid, and I'm *sure* to fall."

He raised the whip—"Do you want it again?" he said: "am I to be kept here all day with your — nonsense. What with one and the other of you I'm to be drove out o' my mind, I think —"

"Mayn't Beauty do the Star-ring, father?"

"Beauty's too big; she's got plenty cast for her: besides I'm not going to get to words again at her. What I say she's to do, I'll make her do, and you too. Come."

The girl, all in tears, darted across the floor behind the dark curtain; the sobbing was heard for some moments: meanwhile the amiable Jem was swearing at his wife for encouraging insubordination.

Lettie returned—her pale face beaming through her tears.

"Beauty *will* do it, father, she can; she'll look better than me a deal, and I can do the cymbal dance instead of her."

"She's never tried this one," growled he; and that moment Colly entered to say all was prepared.

"Keen morning this," said Colly, rubbing his hands—"pails all ice. Drop o' something short wouldn't be amiss—eh mother?" in a low tone to the woman.

He reached the bottle and a cup without a handle. Skurrick helped himself into the pewter pot, from which he had previously ejected the red herring; and they all stood round the stove drinking. Lettie, at her mother's side, supplicated for a drop, and swallowed it eagerly.

"Look alive in there!" cried Skurrick, cracking his whip between the intervals of his dram.

The dark curtain was flung back; and Philip, turning his eyes involuntarily towards it, beheld a young girl, apparently just risen from a mattress spread on the floor, which with a rug and blanket formed her bed. A chair beside it—on which were some tinselled flowers and scissors, with a small looking-glass hung over it—completed the furniture of the nook, and indeed almost filled it.

Utterly ignoring the presence of the group in the outer room, the young girl deliberately proceeded to dress, selecting the different articles from a heap upon the floor.

The heavy shadow, and the squalid misery of all surrounding her, failed to obscure the beauty of this fair creature; rather she seemed to shine out from their midst, like some bright star from out the rack of

blackening clouds. Never did eye behold more perfect loveliness in human shape ; never did sculptor's dream, or poet's vision, raise such ideal to mock all efforts at art's production.

Her figure, full, yet firm and pliant, looked the model of symmetry, every limb in turn displayed, moulded to the perfection of grace and beauty. Her hair, golden brown, fell below her waist in curls, which, though slight, were natural.

Slowly, and as a matter of course, the girl donned the garment on which the woman had been employed the preceding evening ; anticipatory, as was evident, to some performance of horsemanship. As she did so, upon one of those beautiful legs a long black bruise or wale was visible, and she shivered momentarily as the silk pressed it. Her slight attire was soon completed : the lovely arms, neck and shoulders, left bare ; the glorious hair, with some slight rebellion on its part, twisted tightly round the model head, and crowned by a wreath, in the placing of which some moments were devoted to the cracked looking-glass ; then, taking in her hand a light glittering wand, she stepped out from under the dirty blanket, like Aurora from a canopy of envious smoke, and for the first time her face was fairly seen.

So fair, so perfect in every line and feature, so dazzling of complexion, the very incarnation of Beauty—if such positive there be—what name could so well befit this glorious specimen of Nature's workmanship ?

Large blue eyes, over which the long dark lashes held jealous watch ; nose and chin small, child-like, yet marvels of form ; pouting lips, whose slight curl, as scornful of the very homage to her wondrous

beauty, scarce let close upon the small pearly teeth beneath—and withal, calm, expressionless, still, as some Grecian statue of repose. To those deep, full, lustrous eyes, the whole life of the countenance seemed to have betaken itself; yet could it be said, nay, rather felt, that in such lavish bounty, such plenteous loveliness, there was something wanting.

For a minute Philip's eyes rested in wondering awe upon this creation of beauty, as it brushed past him. Momentarily their eyes met, and as he rose to let her pass, with her silver wand she held back her cloud-like tunic from contact with his travel-stained dress, and turned towards Skurrick.

No mortal eye but must pay tribute to such a being; but for more, the lad's heart was closed—woman's beauty, what was it to him!—mockery, heart-sickness.

His gaze fell from the waxen-like shoulders to where, through the covering of flesh-coloured silk, the whip scar was visible.

Aye, Philip! shudder—let your heart soften and know pity for the scornful Beauty! Oh! as she passes you, as her breath is on your cheek, as her fairy foot touches yours, does no instinct of Nature arouse within you?—does no subtle affinity stir your being to acknowledge one common source?—But stretch forth your hand; but take again the tiny palm you so often have pressed to your rough cheek—but look again upon the dimpled face you have so often soothed to sleep upon its pillow—the rosebud lips that were wont to stir your boy's nature with their loving baby whispers, long ago.

No! she passes; she heeds not him; nor dreams he that in the hapless dancing girl he beholds the object

of his anxious wanderings and regrets—the sister Rose he mourns as dead.

“She do look well this morning!—don’t she now?” said Skurrick, setting his head on one side, with the air of a connoisseur.

“Cold though, I’ll be bound!”—said Colly—“this raw morning, and them thin tights. Do give her a drop o’ the stuff to keep the cold out.”

“Ask her, you, Jem,” said the woman.

To the girl, who had stood quite unheeding during these remarks, Skurrick now began talking with his fingers, and Beauty replied with a nod of her head, on which the woman handed her the cup. The girl swallowed the contents eagerly. “No more,” said Skurrick, as he returned the cup to his wife; “she’s life enough without that. Now then!”

As he turned towards the door, a tremendous kick on the other side of the partition was followed by a plunging, a neighing, and a series of demonstrations, threatening apparent destruction to the whole fabric.

“There’s that incarnate devil, at it again!” roared Skurrick. “I’ll shoot her then, Colly, and that’s all about it! Curse her, she’ll worrit all the sense out o’ me, and ruin the place into the bargain!”

Stopping the enraged man, as he was quitting the caravan, Philip spoke a few words to him in a low voice.

“You!—go in!—try that beast! Why, bless your heart, five men wouldn’t manage her when she’s in them tantrums! Oh! you may go, and welcome; only take all the risk upon yourself young man, that’s all. I give you leave to knock her brains out, for the matter o’ that; though she’s been a pretty penny out

o' my pocket. Go and welcome ; but your life ain't worth tuppence with her, so I tell you."

" I don't set much value on it, for the matter of that, myself," said Philip ; " and I can but try."

" Aye, to be sure," said the accommodating Skurrick ; while his wife and Colly, shocked at the evident risk, vainly put in a word of caution.

" Shut up *do*, you two !" said he : " do you suppose the young chap don't know what he's doing ? If he will, why he will ; it ain't me that sends him."

Armed with no more formidable weapons than a rope with a slip noose, a thick rug, and a slice of bread ; Philip prepared to enter the den of the untamed brute, which had not ceased its hostile demonstrations during the few minutes of preparation. He had stipulated that he should go alone, and his proceedings be unwatched ; in pursuance of which agreement, Skurrick had immediately clambered to the aperture before mentioned ; but found it effectually blocked with the jacket of the venturous youth.

" By Gosh ! he's all in the dark !" said he to Colly.

" The lantern's in there," briefly replied the other ; and they listened, with the rest, in breathless suspense.

The kicking and stamping had for a minute redoubled ; there was a wild cry from the creature—a fall—then all was still.

" He's killed !" cried the woman. " It's murdered him ! poor fellow !"

" Hold your row, *do*, you old fool !" was the polite rejoinder of her husband, who was himself quaking in his shoes ; while Colly had already devoured all the nails of his right hand, and was attacking the left. The only one of the group who remained totally

unmoved being the dumb girl. She never stirred, even to return the caress of little Lettie, who had crept up to her, and held one of her hands, saying—"Dear good Beauty to do that dreadful Star-ring for me."—Beauty adjusted her tunic and wreath, and quite unconcerned looked out upon the common where the elfin sprites were going through some professional evolutions, within the temporary erection prepared for practising their several tasks.

Another anxious twenty minutes.—"I heerd a groan, I did indeed, Jem," whispered the woman; to which Skurrick only replied by a look. Colly was on the point of suggesting "something short,"—when the door of the stall was flung open, and Philip appeared, leading by a halter the mare; which followed him tractable and subdued in demeanor as a lamb.

To describe the amazement of all—the delight of Skurrick—the exclamations and adjurations with which they all called upon Steyne to initiate them into his mystery—would need more words than I am inclined to bestow upon the occasion. Suffice it to say that Colly's proposition of "something short all round" was universally acceded to, with of course one exception—that Philip totally refused to enlighten them upon his secret, whereby Mr. Skurrick's gratitude abated considerably of its warmth—that Mr. Busby and his myrmidons refused to believe the fact before their eyes, as other than a "humbug," until the creature had been ridden in turns by all who would venture: to none of them yielding such unqualified obedience as to her tamer, who seemed to have acquired a dominion over her, little short of supernatural; surprising no one more than himself—coolly as he

might appear to take the result of this, his first experiment.

Skurrick insisted upon his remaining with them while they stayed encamped. He couldn't think of parting with him so soon, after what he had done for him. Certainly, Steyne was the only one who as yet had perfect control over the mare, and he might best finish the task commenced. Yet we will not positively assert that Jem's gratitude was not the genuine article unadulterated.

Impatient as Philip was to reach London—to hurry on—to be moving, doing, striving after something—he had some curiosity to witness the entire subjugation of his pupil: a gratification which a few days procured him. A slight recurrence of caprice, followed by a private interview as before, completed the mastery, and under a course of the usual training she promised to become a valuable acquisition to Skurrick's stud.

It was a novel life to Philip, of which he now obtained a glimpse; in all its mournful cadences sounding the same key of his own sad history.

In the *troupe* of Busby was a deformed lad, ill-treated, and worse faring, because useless in every department of the "business." This was Busby's son; his mother died when he was born, and legend connected both these facts with an incident in which Busby's drunken fury bore a conspicuous part—the latter being of such frequent recurrence as to make the tale more than probable.

Mrs. Busby second, a slim aerial sort of personage, followed closely in the footsteps of her liege lord; getting drunk every night of her life in total immu-

nity, which might be ascribed to the fact that she was the "star" of the company.

"Leastways she was,"—continued Colly, who had been enlightening Steyne on these particulars—"until the governor brought out his youngster, Beauty there. She is a beauty, too, and no mistake: ain't she?" They were watching the performance of the contested Star-ring, of which Beauty had relieved her younger companion, and acquitted herself to the perfect satisfaction of her taskmaster.

So swift was the motion, that the spectator failed to catch the moment of contact between the dancer's foot and the back of the horse as it sped round the arena; and the beautiful girl appeared to fly continuously through the hoops, placed alternately at various heights—her course marked by the starry crown upon her head.

"Wouldn't think she was his breed, would you?"—continued Colly. "But she ain't; she's his first wife's: Lettie's this one's. When first I set eyes on her, I thought she was the most sweetest creetur I'd seen. Pity she should be born deaf and dumb! Can't hear no earthly thing but the crack of his whip. He do treat her bad for certain, sometimes; but she's the devil's own spirit, when she's a mind: she'll sulk for days, and never stir for the whip, though there ain't a thing but she can do. He'll make a good thing of her yet. They'll be getting her on the stage—just you see her dancing!—Won't you stop?—Well, never mind, come along. But last winter, I'll tell you, we were at Bullsford, and he joined in with a lot of players; they'd a barn there. Beauty danced, and, my eye! to see the real gentry as did come in their

carriages too. There was one young chap, they did say he was a nobleman, he seemed just crazy after it; the nosegays he'd throw her night after night! He never stopped for nothing else, and it made the other lot mad; so governor he fell out and come away in a huff. But I say it was a rare trick that o' yours wi' the mare. He's savage he can't get it out of you, but he'll surely make it up to you. It's a good hunderd in his pocket.

"And you leave us to-morrow? Well; it's chilly: what d'ye say to a drop o' sumthin? Oh! aye, I forgot, you don't do it: what a pity!"

The following morning the caravans started for a large fair which was to be held some nine miles off. Young Steyne bade adieu to his new friends, the richer by half a sovereign from the liberal Skurrick, and seven shillings which had been forced on him by poor Colly, with the observation that it was a "cursed shame he should get so little, when the governor was a good hunderd in pocket."

When night came down upon the highways and lanes, through which Philip trudged his weary way Londonwards—the crowded circus booth was ringing with the shouts of the multitude, applauding the flying course of the star-crowned "Beauty."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

LITTLE BOB'S MOTHER.

" Danger, long travel, want, and woe,
 Can change the form that best we know,
 For deadly fear can Time outgo,
 And blanch at once the hair.
 Hard toil can roughen form and face,
 And quench at once the eye's bright grace ;
 Nor does Old Age a wrinkle trace,
 More deeply than Despair."

On a gusty night in April, Philip arrived at the goal of his journey. Footsore and spent, he stood at length in London streets. But his attention was little claimed by the bustle and hurry of the scene ; strange as it all was to him. For two hours he had been wandering in search of the address he held on a bit of paper in his hand. He had resolved on seeking neither rest nor food, till the duty was fulfilled, of which the neglect had smote his heart the nearer he drew to the point of his destination.

And now, by dint of enquiry and perseverance, he found himself at Charing-cross ; thence, from what he remembered of poor Bob's description, into St. Martin's-lane. From end to end he traversed it, vainly referring again to the scrap of paper.

Another enquiry, of a woman just turning up a narrow court out of the lane. " Bedfordbury ?" was

the reply to his question : " I am going there. Come along, it's just here."

Steyne followed his conductor, who, a little in advance, held her miserable cloak about her with some difficulty, against the fitful gusts of wind which whirled at intervals down the entries.

They passed through a paved court, and emerged into a street more dirty, ill-lighted, and obnoxious, than any he had yet crossed.

" This is it," said she, stopping. " Is it any one partic'lar as you wants?"

" Deering—Mrs. Deering," said Philip, again referring, quite needlessly, to the scrap of paper in his hand.

" Lor ! come along !" ejaculated his guide. " Why she lives over me—have, these ten months. Well I never !—"

They walked on some yards further ; the woman warning him occasionally of certain pitfalls in the broken and ill-conditioned road, and of breakneck cellars, whence came strange smells, and sounds as strange ; plashing on through puddles of stagnant fluid, augmented now and again by a sudden deluge from a hastily-opened window, without notice or warning given. A lamp at each end afforded the only light, save where, at intervals, a tallow candle guttered and flared in the narrow window of a chandler's shop ; whence would issue a slipshod girl, or man, or half-clad child, cuddling to its breast a portion of a loaf, hungrily picking at the dry corners ; a red-herring perhaps, or dab of slimy butter or black treacle, in a saucer, to swell the feast.

A sharp turn, a dive now into total darkness, and

water over his boots ; Philip by the sound followed his guide down what appeared to be a mere passage ; he touched the walls on either side ; yet by the faint glimmer from within he saw they passed several house-doors ere they stopped before one which stood half open.

" This way," said the woman, as she began to ascend a rickety creaking stair.

Up to the second story, where the woman stopped, opened her own door ; and as the light fell on the stairs beyond she pointed upward.

" It's the next flight : she's in, else she'd ha' put her key on my table. She don't have many visitors." Glancing over Philip sharply, she entered her own miserable apartment, and closed the door.

He groped his way up, and stumbled on to the landing ; all was still : from under a door came a thin streak of light ; here he knocked.

There was no answer, but at the second tap a faint voice said—" Come in."

He entered a garret, the sloping roof of which on one side met the floor. The night-clouds chasing wildly across the sky seemed close in at the curtainless window, which opened on the parapet.

A handful of fire was dying in the grate ; a wicker chair with a rag-cushioned seat, a scrap of carpet, and a small round table, were before the hearth. Upon the table lay some fine sewing, a large double-wicked candle, and a pair of spectacles.

Opposite the window stood a low truckle bed ; on it lay the form of a woman, but it did not move as Philip entered and stood within the door.

" Mrs. Deering," he said, gently.

With a loud cry the woman sat up on her miserable

pallet. The wan moonlight streamed over her white face, as she put back the thick tangled hair from her forehead.

"What is it?" she cried—"who are you?" (peering out to where Philip stood)—"who are you?"

"You don't know me," he said, in a soothing tone; "don't be frightened: I come from your little boy, poor little Bob."

"My boy!—from *him*!—you?—oh my God! my God! it is her, it's her voice—from him! She sprang from the bed, and rushed towards the spot where he stood, but suddenly stopped.

"You—*who* are you?"

"Mrs. Deering, I knew little Bob at the reformatory—" and as he spoke Philip stepped forward; the light of the candle fell upon his face; the woman caught him by the shoulder, flung aside his cap, and pushed back the hair from his forehead.

"Philip! Philip! Philip Steyne! it is him!" cried she, and she threw her arms round him, and cried upon his shoulder; and looked into his face again and again, holding him tightly the while, sobbing in an excess of joy and weakness.

"Oh little Philip; dear Piert's Rest—and Rose—and mother—and poor Tom—I never thought to see you dear, never—oh! where are they, dear? where are they? Take me to them, Philip."

For a moment amazement held him silent. Then, as he gazed down upon the shrieking, sobbing, haggard creature, clinging about him—in her thin white face, her small delicate features, her long, soft, shivering hair, her moist red lips, and violet eyes all drenched and swollen—even in the fond caressing manner—he

seemed to see a ghost of the past—and through want, sickness, misery, and drunkenness, he recognized the petted beauty of the village, sweet Cary Hinton ; whose sad history had furnished food for the village gossip, when he was a boy.

Gradually he led her to the old chair, made her sit down, and tried to soothe her ; but at every word he uttered the grief burst forth anew. “ Her voice it was, just how she spoke to me that night—that last, last night ! ” She had not loosed her hold upon him ; caressingly she laid her head upon his breast, and clung to him. “ Dear Philip—dear old Piert’s Rest—don’t leave me, don’t leave me—I have been so long alone. Oh, don’t leave me dear, dear ! ”

Poor wasted life ; poor, misused, foolish heart !

Hard was the struggle, even in that manly young breast, to keep back emotions so suddenly awakened ; but it was done. Still as a statue young Steyne stood, supporting the poor frail thing, who swayed to and fro with the excess of her own violent and ill-controlled passions.

“ Where are they all ?—your father and mother, and sweet Rosy.”

“ Dead,” Mrs. Hinton, “ all dead ! ” said the young man, hoarsely.

“ Dead ! ” cried Cary, lifting up her head—“ that dear child dead !—mother and father—*all* dead. It’s such wretches as I that live—that live ! ” And in the maudlin fashion of a dram-drinker she began again to weep and sob.

“ Poor Tom, too ; he isn’t dead—Tom isn’t dead ? ” she asked.

“ I saw him not so long since. Don’t—don’t talk about him ; surely you don’t fret for him, Mrs. Hinton ? ”

"Cary—Cary—your mother called me Cary. They called me Cary when I was happy—when I was happy."

"Did *he* leave you?" asked Philip, in a low tone, after a moment's silence.

"No, no," she said piteously—"no, Sir Robert wouldn't leave me, he was good to me—too good. But I couldn't help crying, thinking about poor Tom; and he didn't like that, and when my boy was born, he—" (She fell to crying again, and it was some minutes ere she could continue)—"it *was* his own son—I called it after him, it was his very face; but he did not like it; he wanted me to send it away. I could not part with my child dear, I couldn't. He did love me, poor little Bob did!"

"You will go and see him; he is so anxious to see you." Philip began; but stopped short at the look of amazement the woman gave him, lifting up her head.

"My boy, little Bob? why he died, six months ago!"

Philip's heart smote him. How bitterly he reproached himself for the time spent in what to him was at least a blameless *liaison*, and had wrought him bitter punishment enough, Heaven knows.

"They buried him in the cemetery," Cary went on. "They sent for me when it was too late—he was gone hours before I got there. They had cut off his hair, and they gave it to me. He asked for his mother before he died, and for Philip—that was you—I little thought—"

There was silence for some minutes, then Philip drew away one hand, and raised it to his face.

"Poor little Bob!" he sighed.

"He's better off!" sobbed the young mother, whose sad history so far was told.

Yes, far better than in your charge, poor silly, fond, unreasoning Cary.

Oh, woman! woman! weak, unreliable, in the course of evil and of good alike!—who trusts thee with his happiness makes his venture in the leakiest of craft, that of a surety will founder—smooth waters and sunny skies befalling—as in night and tempest!

Had Cary been candid in her confession, she would have told how, to her repining and lamentation for the man she had fled from, remorse induced another habit; which gained upon her so rapidly as to call forth remonstrance, sure to be followed by a recurrence of tears, complaints, and recourse to the old stimulant of the dram. It was a mixed feeling which had induced Sir Robert to express a wish for the removal of the child from a guardianship certainly unsuitable; and he had suffered much from the unhappy result of his first wrong step.

Cary Deering's caressing ways and sweet gentleness of nature had won upon him, more even than her pretty face: he had loved her for herself, sympathised with her griefs (*sympathy* is not pity, dear friends); and all that affection and care could have done to compensate for what she had suffered, and lost, was lavished on her. But she yet clung to the shreds and relics of her clayey idol—the ruins of her visionary paradise had still a hold upon her. Heaven knows, perhaps 'tis the one protection given such natures—this adherence amid all their vacillation to a first—though it be a proved illusion. In her remorseful moments she would weep and bewail her “poor Tom,” and dwell on what he “might have been” if she had stayed with him; and, under the influence

of the dram, she not unfrequently turned her reproaches on her protector, who at such times found indeed that of his sin he had made himself a whip to his own back.

So reprehension, reproach, complaint, became frequent. The sunniest hours failed to banish the remembrance of the gloom; and, opportunity offering, Sir Robert—a sadder, if not a wiser, man—set out for Egypt and the Pyramids, leaving ample provision for the unfortunate girl, whose native goodness of heart at least made itself apparent in her fixed determination not to be parted from the poor little child, whom for a time she positively idolized.

But you all know how one thing there is that never fails. Persevered in, has drink ever failed to lower the tone of even the highest and strongest natures? Imagine, then, to this poor weak impulsive girl, alone, in idleness, regretful, despairing, and the habit already formed, what it became—how it gained upon her—how with inconceivable rapidity it came to take the place of friends, thought, feeling, even child—how money was wasted, how principal was disposed of, at frightful loss—how furniture, books, luxuries, ornaments, clothes went, one after another; for who was by to say nay, or stay her hand?—how all this came to pass, why relate? It is a story of such oft recurrence.

Her little son, born and nursed in the very lap of luxury, at three years old ran the kennels of Drury-lane; saved only by the almost more than human sweetness and loveliness of his nature, from becoming as one of the vile.

Looking at him, weeping over the blighted life of

this fair blossom, the wretched mother found new motive for drowning reflection ; work she must, to get food for her child, gin for herself. Her old talent served her here ; she got any price almost for the novel and beautiful productions of her needle : then to weep maudlin tears over her child and the memory of poor Tom, was her comfort.

Came the day when, by the malice and cowardice of some young reprobates into whose company the child had fallen, poor Bob was accused of the theft of some linen stolen from a neighbouring laundress ; and, as we have seen, was consigned to the reformatory, where Philip's boyish kindness had rendered it the happiest period of his short and painful existence.

Little thought the coquettish merry-hearted maid of Osteen House, when first she smiled upon the giant Tom, to what a train of evil her bright eyes set the spark !

And now, in her feeble, dependant fondness, she clung to Philip, as to one connected with a past she never ceased regretting ; and he, as may be well supposed, would not hastily turn from one who, even in her degradation, recalled the memory of his mother with reverence and love, and often wept that she had not listened to the words of advice and comfort that good woman spoke to her "that last night."

It was a something to anchor by ; even this poor, drifting, unhappy creature's attachment, which can be estimated only by those, like him, destitute of any worldly tie.

Here then he stayed his wandering ; and it was touching to see how the forlorn woman bestirred herself, with something of the old spirit of housewifery, to

make arrangements for his comfort; if such a word be not too foreign to the miserable resources of such a locality.

A room was vacant, on the same landing; this was hired, and scantily furnished from Philip's fast diminishing little treasure. The poor girl exerted herself, as she had never done in her own poverty, to bring all to a state of perfect cleanliness; with the sight of Philip the spirit of old times seemed recalled. But alas! not all: old memories, nor affection, nor fear of self-betrayal, could even stay for awhile the love of the ruinous dram; and, though for a time young Steyne had no further evidence than that of one of his senses, when he chanced to enter her room, it was not long before—in the maudlin fits of weeping for “poor Tom,” in the laying aside of work, in the neglect of what she had undertaken to do for him in the ordering of his room—the young man learned to know the signs of the unhappy woman's vice.

At first by silent disapproval, by avoiding her presence, and declining her services, he only shewed what he felt: but his abhorrence and disgust soon moved him to a sterner course; and he spoke earnestly and with determination. He depicted to her the career of his father, the terrible closing scene of his life: he even spared her not the later passages of Hinton's own brutal drunkenness; and finally, he announced his determination of at once removing to other quarters, unless she made an effort, ere it was too late, for her own rescue from certain destruction.

The weak woman wept—urged habit, grief, bodily suffering—Philip was immovable, and she finally gave him a promise to endeavour to abstain.

How far kept, they who understand such a character will believe. To the airing of the room, to the caution of concealment, and to observation of the time when, the young man being from home, the dram might be safely indulged in ; so far cunning—the strength of the weak—assisted her.

Easier building on the shifting quicksand, than to mould of such a nature, firmness or high resolve.

Meanwhile each day Philip's anxieties grew heavier for himself. He had formed no idea of the immense difficulty of obtaining employment in London. At every turn he found nothing but rebuff. True he had the highest credentials for honesty, sobriety, industry, and trustworthiness ; but what are such everyday qualifications as these, to recommend a man. The market was already overstocked with them ! He had formed his plans, as he believed, humbly and reasonably ; but when months passed, and his small stock of money was nearly exhausted, yet no chance of work appeared, even his sanguine spirit almost grew faint, and he retired each day to his poor garret with a yet gloomer belief that Fate had marked him for her especial sport.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

GATHERED.

“Beauty, theme of innocence, how may guilt discourse thee?
 Let holy angels sing thy praise, for man hath marred thy
 visage;
 Still the maimed torso of a Theseus can gladden' taste with its
 proportions,—
 Though sin hath shattered every limb, how comely are the
 fragments!”

M. F. TUPPER.

It is a small octagonal boudoir, fitted with every appliance of ease and comfort, a very temple of luxury and taste. Heavy crimson draperies, shutting out the windows, sweep the rich velvet carpet; voluptuous couches, downy cushions, low shell-like chairs, a Venus might fill, stand temptingly around; with tables and stands of costly wood and marble, gilt laden with rare and beautiful objects, and vases of softly-tinted exotics.

Rich paintings, chiefly mythological, cover the ceiling and the panels of the walls, save where they are filled by mirrors half veiled in clouds of lace, whence coyly peep forth exquisite figures in alabaster, supporting lamps of crystal, which shed a subdued moonlight radiance over all.

In a low recessed fireplace burns a fire of aromatic woods, whose faint odour mingling with the pastiles,

set in dishes of burnished porcelain upon the velvet-covered, heavily fringed, mantelpiece, fill the apartment with a voluptuous and entrancing atmosphere, on which, at this moment float the soft streams of hidden music, so subdued, that they seem to mingle with and sooth, rather than break, the silence.

Upon a couch of crimson velvet, within the radiance of the glowing fire, yet guarded from its heat by a screen of silvered coral, lies the queen of this enchanting bower. Her dress, of pale blue satin and gossamer lace, lies about her like a cloud; her golden curling hair, half escaped from the silver net, falls over the cushion—where her lovely shoulder lies, like driven snow against the red sunset—and half veils her bosom, on which the stringed pearls show yellow by comparison. One arm is thrown above her head, the lace sleeve, falling back, leaves it bare almost to the shoulder, and the rich rubies glow like blood-drops on its waxen fairness. Upon the small fingers, and in the tiny ears, gleam jewels; and from beneath her dress peeps out a tiny slipper, like a rosebud dropped in dewy pearls.

Could I catch the image of a poet's vision, or fix the transient reflection of some floating creature of the air, mirrored in the glories of a sunset lake, I might hope to tell how beautiful she was; amid the splendour of surroundings which seemed all too poor to do her homage.

You have seen the little tripping fairy of Birdiethorn—the lovely dancing girl of the riding-booth flashed momentarily upon you, from out the sordid filth and depravity of her tyrants; but these were poor, to Beauty as I show her to you now, in the fulness, the

luxury, the repose of perfection ; with all that art, and wealth, and pride, could lend to add a lustre.

For (if it were ever true of any) hers was not the order of beauty "most adorned when least." Not a jewel, not a fold, not a sparkling lustre, not a draped grace, but seemed born to her, not adding to, yet of, not gained, but gaining by, adoption near one who might be well imagined destined to reign over the realm of the Beautiful.

So she lies, her large blue eyes gazing at her companion, who, on a low cushion beside the couch, is holding one of her hands in his.

"Sweet angel, beautiful pet, I do not even know which you should best understand, if you heard:" for he has been murmuring soft nothings to her in French and English, and once he tried Italian—all with equal effect. Beauty had but smiled and showed her pearly teeth, and languished with her soft eyes.

"Loveliest darling as you are! if you could but speak to me!—yet I am a fool, too, an ungrateful fool! to wish for the very thing that has disgusted me with other women. Why, what would it be, but longing for this and pining for that—finding one isn't what one used to be—blowing up in a jealous fit, or flirting under one's very nose with the first fool that comes; by Jove it's the perfection of the thing, a woman without a tongue; lovely creature like this, too—believe she loves me for myself, too; not like the rest of the harpies." And he kissed the hand he had that morning loaded with jewels.

"So rich, too; something so excessively novel, this talking on one's fingers—makes a fellow so safe with her. Can't hear anything, and don't know anything

but what one chooses to tell her, and no one else can talk stuff to her."

The handsome profligate began to talk on his fingers to the dumb girl, who answered him swiftly in like fashion; and so, for a time, they conversed, till Beauty, in acknowledgment of something he had said, half raised herself from her cushions to lay her head upon his shoulder, and, passing one arm about him, with all the heaven of her blue eyes smiled up into his vapid countenance.

"Diamonds! ah, to be sure, she shall have diamonds. Ma Belle shall have everything she does but admire: and since she cannot ask for it, we'll learn to read in her eyes what she would have—sweet angel."

There was a long silence; the soft perfume, and softer music, melting into an impalpable atmosphere.

"By Jove!" mused the young noble, "I almost wish now I hadn't taken up with that Bulldog affair. I don't care about taking her to England, the fellows will be sure to get scent of her; and it would be such a novelty, such a sort of mystery that would be the very thing to set them wild. There's that Colonel Gray, too, he'd be safe to cut me out; always did—odd too—deuced odd!——"

Here he glanced at a mirror which reflected his own well-formed figure, as recumbent leaning against the couch, the golden hair of the dumb girl fell adown his shoulder, her fair brow and closed eyes touching his cheek.

He smiled as he gazed. "'Pon my soul, wouldn't make a bad picture! Ha! how the fellows would stare

to see it at the Academy exhibition. She's positively, without exception, the most beautiful creature I ever saw. 'No, it won't do to take her with me—sure to be some bother; not but what I believe the girl has an affection for me, for myself. Odd, now, to think one shouldn't know anything about who or what she was! As to her being of that fellow's stock—I as much believe that as ——. I incline to think she was born dumb, though he said it was the fright of a fall; and the woman, I believe, could have told something worse. However, it does not much signify, I've got her—that's certain. Ma Belle!"

To arouse her, and amuse himself, the lover began drawing the bracelets from the arms of his lovely property, who at first opened her lovely eyes in mute astonishment; but when she found only one remaining, and that the rest were put out of sight, she frowned, bit her lips, and, raising herself from the couch, stoutly resisted his playful attempts to possess himself of her hands, uttering a low murmur of disapprobation.

"Why, ma Belle is positively in a passion! Ah! I like her. She shan't have one of the things back—see, ma Belle, I put them all away."

He made as if he would have carried them away; but she sprang up, and stamping one of her small feet violently, with clenched hands and flashing eyes, hindered him from moving. The young Sybarite laughed.

"Aye! why, this is quite a new part, ma Belle! You have got a spirit; you'll be murdering me one of these days if I offend you, you hussy, you will. Ah! now come, I'll not vex her. Kiss me, then, and

you shall have them, and twenty more to match them, you queen of jewels."

As he stooped to clasp them on her arms, and seated her on the couch, a silvery bell sounded outside the door.

"Come in," said the young man; and an English servant entering, said something in a low tone, as if mindful of the lady's presence.

"Ah, well; ah, let him come here. Bother the fellow!" he added, as the man left the room—"I shan't leave my girl for him. Now, ma Belle, you just turn your head that way while the brute's in the room. I don't choose even the Bulldog to see my pet's face."

He intimated his wish by signs to her, but Beauty did not give much heed to them. She understood some one was to see her, and her attention was all given to the fall of her robe and the turn of her bracelets, as she reclined upon her cushions.

The bell again sounded; and as the master bade "come in," the door opened, and there stepped into the boudoir, a being about as much in keeping with it as a rat in a nautilus-shell.

Taller by half a head than the young nobleman, himself above the middle height, broad of build, firm in bulk, big jointed, bullet headed. His black hair close cut, and cheeks cleanly shaved of every particle of whisker, showed his huge red flap ears to disadvantage; his high cheek bones and iron jaw more prominent than pleasant, his beetle brow hung over his heavy dark eyes like the cavern where a murdered body may lie hid.

He was dressed in a suit of green plaid stuff, fitting

him all too tightly; on his thick wrists he wore white woollen cuffs or mufflers, and in one monster fist held a short thick stick, crosswise, as we often see it carried by performers of wondrous feats of pedestrianism, and sporting bullies of all kinds.

As he closed the door, and stood ducking his head to his patron, the velvet carpet seemed to wince beneath the pressure of his hob-nailed bluchers; the music had already stopped at the motion of the master's hand to a panel, but the delicate atmosphere seemed to shudder and recoil upon itself, as from the huge man's presence there exuded a strange overpowering odour, as of some subtle spirit made gross by animal contact. It was not gin, unless gin having passed through some unknown process by human pores and fibres. Certainly it was there, of and belonging to, the man—not his breath, not his clothes, neither that ordinary scent by which we detect one who has "been drinking"—yet a palpable giving off of an essence which seemed to render significant and rational enough the theory of spontaneous combustion: you felt certain that you only had to hold a lighted match near the mountain of flesh, to have as considerable a specimen of an "indicator" as need be.

"Well, Bulldog—that'll do: you needn't come any further," said the patron. "You look in good case enough. Now don't go spoiling sport, and making an ass of yourself, like you did before. You can keep your hands off the gin and brandy when you like. That break out of yours cost me a cool hundred, you drunken brute, all for nothing too. It's a blessing Bob Allen would take you again at all; there isn't

many trainers would, I can tell you. Is he with you? I told him to come—”

A fearful shriek from the Beauty, who had just turned her eyes upon the Bulldog; and she fell into the arms of her lover, as he darted towards her.

“Confound your ugly carcase! you’ve frightened my little girl to death with your hangdog visage! She’s fainted! by Jove she has!” and he rang half a dozen bells at once. “There, be off, and be hanged to you!—I was a fool to have you here! You might have left that murderous bludgeon out of your hand where there’s a lady. She can see, if she can’t hear! Water, Martin! and wine, quick! give me that essence! Show the man out; be off! I’ll see you to-morrow at Allen’s.

“My angel sweet!—by Jove how lovely she looks though—she’s coming to—he’s gone, my queen—the brute has gone. Pardon me, my most divine, that I allowed him to enter.”

The girl glanced fearfully round as he laid her on the couch; closing her eyes, she shuddered, as if awakening from a hideous dream.

“Curse me,” growled the Bulldog, as he descended the stairs of the lordly hotel, “but that wench has made a pretty thing of it! Shouldn’t ha’ known her, neither, but for her shrieking out, and him saying she can’t hear. It’s her sure enuf; but my word she’s growed a beauty, she is so. Old Skurrick’s feathered *his* nest pretty well out of the bargain, I’ll swear. Hi, that there fall when he whacked her through the hoops on fire, knocked all the speech out of her, I expect. Eh, but she’s got into a good berth wi’ that rich young fool.”



“What an odour that brute has left behind him !
The beast bathes in gin, I believe, now he mayn’t drink
it. Bring wine, Martin ; turn down those lamps.
Ah, ma Belle smiles. You are better, my queen.
Come, here is your favourite wine : drink, ma Belle.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

THE DOCKS—A FEATHER.

"We do but row, Fate steers the boat."

HUDIBRAS.

MONTHS passed on, and found young Steyne still seeking employ. So hopeless had it now become, that as winter set in, he would gladly have accepted work which he had at first rejected, confident in the certainty of obtaining something more suitable to his capabilities and wishes. Now, in turn, his services were declined, even here: the severe weather found hundreds in a like position, with whom employment at other seasons was regular.

His store of money had dwindled slowly, in spite of every possible economy; the faster that Philip's unhappy neighbour, poor Mrs. Hinton (or Deering, as she had called herself) had been a great part of the time failing in health, and become totally dependent on him, without whose assistance she must have fared but sorrowfully.

The young man took care that she should want for nothing; he enlisted the services of the woman lodging beneath, who had brought him to the house

the first night; and who, for a small remuneration, readily undertook to tend the invalid; and, for a wonder, fell in with his express injunction that not a drop of intoxicating drink should be conveyed to her, under any pretext whatever.

Cary had counted on a willing auxiliary in aiding her to her favourite stimulant, but she found all her entreaties and supplication vain. The woman declared "she'd not see the young feller cheated. She'd ha' likely died in the work'us if it hadn't been for him, and she was blessed if one penny of the money as he put into her hands should go in drink, that it shouldn't—*she* knew nobody never died for want on it, so that was all stuff. When Mrs. Deering got well, she might do as she liked; but not a drop would she get of her, so she might rest easy."

That the miserable creature did suffer for the time, from the craving of the unnatural appetite she had fostered, there is no doubt; that the regimen of quiet, and nourishing food, restored her from what would have carried her off under another course, is certain: and the young mentor did not let slip the occasion of her expressing her deep gratitude to him, to impress upon her the blessings and advantages of relinquishing the use of the hateful poison which had already told fearfully upon her constitution.

But anxieties for himself were weighing heavily upon him. Ceasing to draw any distinction, setting aside all preference or prejudice, he made up his mind to accept absolutely anything that offered, but for some time he found himself not one whit the nearer. He might have indulged in the extreme of fastidious-

ness, for anything that his determination benefited him.

With horror he contemplated the probability of finding himself destitute in this great city—a stranger, friendless, without a resource.

Small need to tell of the weary days spent in pacing the long bustling streets; in anxious scanning of advertisements, in meals abridged to save the pence necessary for registry-fee at some petty office, for searching the pages of some especial journal; or in the brief indulgence of some heart-sickening hope, raised only to be again and again dashed from him; of sleepless nights, passed in recalling the scenes of long ago, and the curse that had blighted it: such memories ever reverting to the one fixed idea, clenching yet more firmly that solemn purpose to which he had vowed himself—revenge upon the man.

"It's just that I live for," he would say to himself; when—lashed to agony by the vivid images memory conjured up—he would rise from his bed, and pace his wretched garret to and fro. "It will come—the time *will* come, unlikely as it now seems—the time of my revenge will come, and I care not what I suffer, what I have to bear to gain it."

For Philip associated but that one name with the ruin of his family. He admitted no shading of the history, no lighter thread was woven in with the blank web of absolute wrong. But for Crichton they would all have been living together now, well and happy. Wrong upon wrong, sorrow upon sorrow, had come to swell the sum of the great account, and his own destitute and forlorn state formed a share, the more galling that it seemed to mock at all his sworn purpose of retaliation.

Poor Cary sympathised with his trouble as far as she could enter into it; her scanty fire and frugal supper were always placed at his service, with cheerfulness; but Steyne most usually preferred going hungry to bed, where he might be alone with his grief: and truth to say, Cary stood somewhat in awe of the stern young advocate of a self-discipline which entered not into the conformation of the woman.

Early in April, Philip found work.

The son of a lodger, in the miserable haunt at Bedfordbury, got work in the Docks: his mother was removing to a locality more convenient to the employment; and, taking leave of her gossip, Mrs. Deering, she spoke of her boy's good fortune.

Cary, ignorant even of what the employment in question might be, related the circumstance to Philip; who, careless what it was, so it should be work, went, found, and entered upon, the duties of a dock-labourer.

We need not to dwell upon all he felt and thought in this new phase of reality; or how near he came to the decision that life, if this were it to him, were not so choice an article he need be cautious of preserving it. When, at the close of his first day's labour, he joined in with the gang passing in review before their superiors—when he saw hats and caps held out for survey—saw suspicious hands passed searchingly over the person of each man—felt his turn come too, and the half-crown flung, which his fingers would fain have rejected, as the hot blood mounted to his brow—came up the old sting, the bitterness—fresh wrong and degradation, added to the rest; fresh motive for life and energy—yes, a time would come, and even that endurance was sweetened by the belief.

It grieves me that I should have to relate such

things of my hero; how this cherished idea of revenge served him in lieu of hope and faith in brighter times; how it seemed gradually to become the very principle of his existence; and wrought him up to marvels of endurance, self-denial, and industrious perseverance, which might have touched the sympathies of the greatest moral philosopher going; which proves that we need look a little further than results, before we pronounce upon the genuineness of the motive.

I am afraid, too, that about this time, young Steyne did not stand high in the opinion of his fellow-men, which should be desirable—seeing what small account we make of conscience, truth, nature, and the very belief we swear by, to obtain it.

But, in the first place, Phil did not smoke nor drink; in a word, he was not sociable, which those gentlemen on their 2s. 6d. daily did contrive to be. In the next place, he never shirked nor undervalued his own strength, rather exerting it beyond its due, than require the aid of a comrade—uncompanionable this; it got him, besides, a sort of distinction in the Docks which was not approved by laziness and envy. He was silent, too, stern—grumpy, the men called him. And when I have added that Philip always managed to look decent and clean, however poor his attire, and that his manner and conduct soon procured for him almost total exemption from the derogatory process—which it is galling even to witness towards English workmen of any grade—at quitting the Docks daily, I have said enough to make it evident why young Steyne should be nothing of a favourite among his daily associates.

With poor Cary I fear he was not much more so,

though she cooked, and mended and ironed his linen, being remunerated liberally by Philip. They still occupied adjoining garrets, nearer the young man's "place of business;" but, truth to say, Mrs. Deering stood in wholesome awe of the stronger judgment, where her conscience too keenly reproached her; and she scarcely held him so dear as she might, considering how disinterestedly he sought only her welfare.

I am not sure that Steyne was at this time altogether unhappy. He had a *purpose*, and a Purpose, my friends, will sometimes stand a good deal for happiness—somewhat like the ghost of the loved dead in its resemblance—a fearful substitute, but still one; and he kept to his purpose with a will.

The moment four o'clock released him from the Docks, he sped in search of other employment, which in due course he found, I forget now what, but it held him on till late into the evening, and even then he was not above—. No, on second thoughts, why should I risk giving offence to some who, with less of my Philip's proud independence of men's opinion, yet bear his name and much of his nature, and who might rather his virtues and abilities were handed down in some other way than the recital of these passages.

* * * * *

It was a scorching summer-day. As you quitted the broiling pavements of city streets and squares, for the strangely smelling, damp, cool wharves and passages of the Docks, you mentally blessed your stars that had guided you, this day of all others, to a spot where you might actually enjoy the sensation of

breathing freely. More than one stout individual, bent on exploration in that locality, actually refused to quit the shady precincts, so long as permitted by the rules to remain, and had very serious thoughts of secreting themselves behind some cask, barrel, or mighty package, to revel in a night of cool and calm repose.

"I positively quite envy—haw, the fellahs, here, haw—refreshing quite, positively," was the remark that fell from one of a large party who had that afternoon visited the Docks.

"It ~~is~~ refreshing—quite a mercy—I thought I must have dropped," put in a lady of extraordinary dimensions, fanning herself rapidly as she spoke, and disposing herself composedly to be seated upon a treacle tub, had not the timely intervention of another lady prevented it.

"Some champagne iced now—haw, if one could get such a thing—haw," continued the fop, applying his eye-glass, as he spoke, to observe some object on board a ship that lay just off where they stood.

"I thought you envied the men here, Mr. Finch: they don't get champagne, I guess, poor fellows!" said the merry voice of a young girl of the party, as she danced in front, and looked laughingly up in his face.

"For shame, Kate," said a very stately lady, richly dressed, whose especial favourite Mr. Finch appeared to be. "Pray do not mind what she says, Albert; she is so wild—and when will you discontinue those outlandish expressions;—'I *guess*,' indeed you have had time enough to cure yourself of them."

"Aunt, dear, I beg your pardon if I vexed *you*," said the young girl, coming up to her aunt's side, and

taking her hand, caressingly, "I didn't mean to vex you."

The sly emphasis on the word was in itself an offence, but one the lady could hardly take cognizance of; so she merely added a general injunction to the young lady to "behave herself;" and the light-hearted girl was off again, seeing everything, questioning, and imparting all she knew; always in advance of the rest.

"You see this is, haw,—where, haw—"

"Mind, Mr. Finch! mind, the tub!" cried Kate; and Mr. Finch, too much occupied with his own eloquence to heed the "By 're leave, sir," only by a timely spring saved himself, or his exquisite attire, from utter annihilation.

"Poor fellows! I'm sure it's hard work," said Kate compassionately, as a young man toiled past, beneath a huge load; stripped to the shirt-sleeves, his bronzed face glowing with heat and exertion.

"Haw, bless you, they're used to it."

"Oh! my feather, my feather!" cried the young lady, as the long feather from her hat having become unfastened, was lifted by a sudden draught of air from a passage, and carried towards the river.

"Oh, my poor feather!" and she sprang after it.

"Good God! the shaft!" cried the exquisite, with the scream of a woman; and with horror they beheld the girl, who had stopped at some little distance, to pick up her feather, exactly beneath the descending platform of the shaft heavily laden.

The women shrieked in chorus, and closed their eyes, horror-stricken. The next moment the girl was dashed aside, as a young man threw himself beneath, and, for a moment, literally sustained the ponderous

weight. But it descended, swayed, a huge package rolled off, and, as he stepped from under, struck him to the ground.

The young lady was saved from a horrible death; the man lay crushed, bleeding, senseless.*

With speed the burden was lifted off, and preparation made for carrying him to the hospital—"And we will send this evening to know how he is," said the lady who evidently headed the party; for, too much terrified to care for longer sight-seeing, they had followed the men to the entrance, and a cab having been called, in which the wounded man was laid; they gathered round the carriage which had awaited them.

The young girl, who had been crying bitterly ever since, now for the first time looked up.

"And where are they going to take the poor fellow, aunt?"

"To the hospital, where he will be taken care of."

"He shan't go to the hospital—he *shan't*! aunt, it was all for me, it was through me—how can you let him? they cut people's legs off there—he shall not—I won't get in! Do aunt, please, let him have our doctor; he is so good, he will cure him. Pray, aunt, bring him home, and let him have our doctor."

In vain her friends, and even the bystanders, assured her that he would have the best care at the hospital, that everything would be done for his comfort—she was obstinate.

"It's too cruel of you," she cried, sobbing; "it was all through me! He saved me, and now you let him go to strangers."

It was in vain her aunt endeavoured to exert her authority. Kate seldom did rebel, but now her heart

was in it. Meanwhile, all preparations had been made for placing the poor sufferer as easily as possible to take him to the hospital.

"Maybe," said one of the men, "if as the lady was to send some one to say as they took a interest in Steyne, it's likely they'd set more account by him; and he must be seen to at once, miss, for it's a bad hurt."

"Oh! who will go, aunt?"

"*I cannot, child: I said I would send a servant.*"

Kate looked imploringly at Mr. Finch, the only male of the party. The elegant Albert had, doubtless, good reasons for wishing to stand well with the young lady; and he volunteered his services, not without considerable compunction.

"Oh, thank you, Albert—thank you," said the sobbing girl. "Don't let them cut his leg off; and tell them to give him everything, and make haste back and tell us how he is, please, Mr. Finch."

This arranged, the cab having started; Mr. Finch, much to his disgust, upon the box—for he could not think of going inside with a "fellah." Kate suffered herself to be seated in the carriage, and resigned herself to listen to her aunt's tirades, who, when somewhat recovered from her fright, spared her niece no particle of the bitter truth—that she had been the cause of all this suffering and trouble.

Eloquently as the good lady dilated upon the anguish that was doubtless being endured by the poor young man, I question whether she would have ever bestowed a second thought upon him, further than to send perhaps a few bottles of wine and jellies to his bedside.

Mr. Finch's report was gloomy enough. The leg was not broken, but so crushed that there was every probability it would be necessary to amputate. But fever had set in so high that nothing could be done just yet, save allay it by every means.

Poor little Kate, when the rest had all sat down to whist and cribbage, stole up to the bed-room, where, watering the white quilt with her tears, she prayed she might be let to feel some of the pain, instead of the poor man, and that it might please God he shouldn't have his leg cut off.

"I don't know what I shall do with her," the good aunt would say in despair at what she considered the offences against *bienséance* and the proprieties, of which her niece was too often guilty. "My nephew has a great deal to answer for, carrying the child out among a parcel of savages. What could be expected. She will never, I fear, get rid of those peculiar notions, do what I will, though she is certainly improved since she came to me. Those horrid backwoods! Yes, my nephew has much to answer for."

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH.

KATE.

" Standing with uncertain feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet !"

LONGFELLOW.

THAT the leg was not cut off—that out of a very ugly job indeed, a skilful and successful cure had been effected—might have been evidenced to any one, cognizant of the accident, who had seen Steyne as, some nine weeks after the date of our last chapter, he walked down one of the handsome quiet squares, in a rather unfashionable quarter of the town—going, as in duty bound, to return thanks to those to whom he was informed he owed the extra attention and care he had met with, and by whose agency his sufferings had received the ameliorations of many a luxury and comfort.

To Mrs. Caslin he was told the debt of gratitude was due, and right willingly Philip went to acquit himself of it; and also, by the lady's desire, to show himself at the house, the cure complete.

He was shown into a vast dining-room. He sat down, for his walk had slightly wearied him his eyes

wandered over the huge pictures and extensive belongings of the solemn apartment; his thoughts occupied with his own uncertain fate—would he find a vacancy at the Docks, or should he once more try for other employment? Cary, too—he had fears for her—she had been to see him several times, and, to his sorrow, the traces of the old vice were even more and more visible.

“In the dining-room, James?” said a voice outside.

“Yes, Miss.”

Philip rose to his feet as the door opened, and there entered the fair cause of his accident, who, running up to him, utterly ignoring the elaborate bow with which he had prepared to greet her, seized his hand in both of hers, and looking up in his face, exclaimed—

“Oh, I am so glad you are come! I have wanted to come and see you so; but they wouldn’t let me. And are you well—quite? Is the poor leg quite well, and strong—quite?” rubbing her own member so indicated very vigorously at the same time.

Philip assured her of the fact.

“Let me see you walk, though. Yes—ah!—and can you run, and jump, and all—*just* as well as ever, now?”

The young man reiterated the assurance, so urgently that indeed the only doubt seemed to be, whether the limb were not benefited by the accident.

“So glad—so very thankful, I am,” said the singular child, clasping her little hands. “Oh, I was so afraid that you’d have had it cut off; and I don’t know what I should have done then. It was all my fault; and I’ve thought so much about it. Did it pain you *very* dreadfully?”

I can pardon Philip the little sacrifice of truth con-

tained in his answer; for I have known Kate, and can imagine how those large loving eyes would be looking up, in all the earnestness of the child, stroking the big hard hand the while, in her little fingers, standing by his side. I think he might have risked a heavier sin, to spare those eyes a tear.

"I pray'd it mightn't," she said; then, in a lower tone—"I guess you saved my life;" and bending her head, she pressed her lips to the hard hand, and a tear fell on it.

The long soft curls hid the little cheeks and brow, that blushed red a moment after; not for the act, but at what aunt would have said, whose footsteps just then sounded in the hall; and, ere Philip could have spoken, she entered.

"He's well, Aunt; quite well and strong!" said the impetuous girl, running forward.

"Indeed, I am extremely glad to hear it," said the lady, with a slight bend and a motion of the hand that the young man should be seated. "I am truly rejoiced that you are perfectly restored to health; and I trust this will be a salutary lesson to my niece, and impress upon her the necessity of putting more restraint upon her actions, and behaving in a manner more befitting a lady. Indeed I shall scarcely regret the occurrence, if it prove the means of confirming those lessons I so constantly labour to instil into her mind."

The glow of childish enthusiasm had all vanished from the face of the young creature, in whose behalf the eloquent lady was so liberal with the sufferings of other people; but she seemed to listen rather with an air of long-suffering endurance than with any very hopeful sign of contrition.

"Your hair is sadly disordered, and you look flushed,"

continued the aunt, who, despite her haughty bearing towards the dock labourer, had not disdained to bestow ten minutes on her mirror before giving audience.

"Go and let Helen dress you, while I speak to the young man," she added, to her niece.

"His name is Steyne, aunt—Philip Steyne," said Kate, almost angrily, as she went out; for she dared not disobey, though her heart was very full as she went slowly up to the dressing-room.

"I desired you should wait on me as soon as you left the hospital, on the part of my niece and myself, to express our gratitude for the service you rendered her, and, in acknowledgment, to present you with these,"—laying on the table a couple of ten-pound notes; adding, as she rose, "I wish you every success in whatever you may undertake. You will, doubtless, like to rest awhile; I will order some refreshment to be brought."

She had her hand upon the bell, when Philip's words arrested her, as he stood up and took his hat from the table.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am; I did not come here for anything of the kind; I came to thank you and the young lady for your kindness in getting me so much better attended to than most of the poor fellows would be, in such a case. I know I should else most likely have lost a limb. As to the accident, ma'am, it might have happened just as well any other way; and I should do the same to-morrow if it was to be over again: I did not think about it when I did it; and I should no more think of taking money, for saving a human life, than I should of selling my flesh or my blood out at a price. I thank you, ma'am, just the same; but I shall not take it."

The lady, who had heard him out, simply from surprise hindering speech, had opened her lips to make some observation, when a bevy of visitors was announced, and with a brief injunction against "absurd pride," Mrs. Caslin swept away to her reception-room.

I have nowhere painted my chief personage as a marvel of good sense; so you will not, perhaps, find it very inconsistent that he should so blindly quarrel with his good fortune as to deliberately turn his back upon those tempting crisp bits of paper, and quit the house of plenty—where he might fairly be supposed to have a claim—with a hungry appetite and empty pockets. But we all have our own and different estimates of the proportionate value of certain things: and young Steyne, it seems, prized the gratification of proving his pride and independence, before that haughty lady, at something over £20 of good hard cash.

De gustibus non est disputandum. There are so many shades, too, go to make up a man's mind. Largely as Phil could talk about saving a human life—if it had happened to be the old lady now that he had saved—well, the notion of the £20, you know, might not have seemed so incongruous—the touch of a warm pair of young lips, the drop of a grateful tear, have wonderful power, for such slight things.

As he walked out into the hall another carriage drove up, he stepped into a side passage. At that moment Kate ran down the stairs and into the dining-room. It was empty—the notes upon the table told a tale to her quick perception. Darting into the hall, now empty, she caught sight of Steyne in the act of quitting the house; she ran to him, and putting her hand upon his arm,—“Are you going,” said she, her eyes filling with tears — “Oh, I know, I know—my

aunt has offered you money, and you wouldn't have it; I was sure of it—I knew it. Oh she might have done something else for you!—and you saved my life; and I've nothing—” quick as thought she unclasped from her neck a little coral chain she wore, “Please take this; do what you like with it, it ~~is~~ my own. Good-bye, good-bye—here comes my aunt—oh! do go that way, then she will not see you; for she will only vex you—go.” She pointed to a back door which a servant had just opened. Philip caught at her hand, and bowing over it as it had been a queen's, just touched it with his lips. Then he quitted the house and walked slowly up the mews, one hand within his breast; as little Kate turned into the dining-room, and flinging her hat off upon a chair, she fell into what was a rare exhibition with her—quiet but bitter weeping.

As Philip walked up the quiet mews absorbed in his own thoughts, two men stood at the door of a stable which they had just quitted, talking. As young Steyne passed, one of the pair ceased talking—for a moment or two answered at random the remarks of the other, then hastily bade him good-bye, and ran after Philip, as hard as his legs would carry him.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, as Philip looked up; then added, “Blame me! but it is him! How are you old fellow? Give us your fist; upon my soul I'm glad to see you, that I am!”

Philip did not appear to reciprocate the other's cordiality, though he gave him his hand, which was shaken with much apparent heartiness.

“And where have you been hiding yourself all this precious while?—How's the world been a-using of you? not too well, by your looks. I thought to have seen you riding in your carriage by now; and many a tin

I've said to that sap Colly, 'I wonder what's become of that young chap; I'll be bound he's doing a good thing for himself.' "

"So well that I've just come out of the hospital, where I've been laid up for two months and more, with a leg that I but just saved."

"Ah! kick—dangerous work I always said."

Philip gave a brief but sufficient explanation of *where* the accident happened.

"But I say, you don't mean to tell me you've never gone on with that horse-taming dodge?"

No; Philip, like many another with an available talent at his fingers' ends, had totally overlooked it, while applying himself to obtaining other employment: perhaps he scarcely had the faith in his own specific, necessary to proffer his services. Something of the kind he said to Skurrick.

"*Last!* but it did last, I can tell you. Egad! I never had such a docile creature in the place; it went to my heart to part with her to that drunken devil Busby. But I want to have a talk with you: suppose we go in. Oh! what, haven't you got over your old spite again the publics? Well, I don't care; let's go into this coffee-shop and have some tea and stuff; I'll stand the damage. I want to have a talk."

That Skurrick wanted something of his newly-recognized acquaintance was certain, or he would not so freely have volunteered expense. That he had a motive, and a powerful one too, for deviating so far from his usual course as to state the truth about the mare, is also safe conjecture; and in the course of that meal, most welcome to one of the company, he enlightened Philip on the point. A trainer and breaker of horses with whom he had some connexions,

had had confided to him the most beautiful animal, as Skurrick assured Philip, that was ever seen, but with a temper and spirit that had set at defiance all known methods of torture and discipline. Again and again in their consultations had Skurrick quoted the instance of his mare, and of the almost supernatural power exercised by the lad who so thoroughly subdued her; and as often his friend had sworn he was prepared to give a hundred down, to any man who would break the brute, though he didn't believe the man lived who could do it.

Now he proposed to introduce Philip, of course under certain conditions, regarding the remuneration, for so profitable an introduction. He said nothing about the sum that his friend was willing to give, certain that Steyne would contemplate nothing nearly of the amount, and that he might benefit himself and serve his friend, by hinting as much, and so secure a larger *douceur* for himself.

So willingly did Philip give in to his proposals, that Skurrick cursed his own folly in not rating his services higher; and vowed he would lose no opportunity, by fair means or foul, to secure the secret.

They were to wait on the horsebreaker that very day.

"If it was midnight he'd be thankful to be called to see you," said Skurrick, "I've laid it on so about you, he's been crazy to get hold of you. What a blessed chance you come down that ere mews!"

Philip thought of who sent him that way.

"What has become of that beautiful girl, Skurrick, that was with you?" he asked carelessly, as they walked along.

"Oh the hussy! she took herself off with some dancing foreign fellow—left me in the lurch—ungrateful wench, after teaching her all I did. It wa

that first made me think of giving up; there was no one to take her place, so I made over the horses and the boys to Busby, and 'prenticed Letty to him. I'm keeping a public now, you know, down Hoxton way."

The new patron, by a wonderful chance, was not every inch a rogue; he entertained such a respectful idea of the risks to be run, in the task Philip undertook, that he made a straightforward offer of the sum he had named, nor would he wink at any scheme of the less scrupulous Skurrick for defrauding him of any fraction of a reward so justly earned, if earned at all—as he still doubtingly said.

The cool assurance, the simple preparations, the steady self-dependence of the young man, filled with amazement, amounting to horror, the bevy of attendants and hangers on.

Philip had gained in strength, in experience, in his knowledge of the animal—and above all, in that of his fellow-men—since his last experiment. He knew that to secure their full faith, his task should seem not too easy. Against prying eyes, too, he took full precautions.

* * * * *

"Told you so!" cried Skurrick, as at the end of the second day, the task was accomplished to the conviction even of the most sceptical. "Was I right? Isn't he a trump?"

Speech was lost to the horsebreaker, in the depth of his amazement and awe—as he counted down the guineas, to "Mr. Steyne, Sir."

Golden guineas! what a language you speak!—is there anything in this world proof against it?

To him they brought mingled feelings. Poor Cary he would make her glad. Then he bent for a minute

over the heap, and tossed them in his fingers, and pondered, till, as his lip curled, with a heavy sigh he said, "Ah! if—" and impatiently turned away, as from himself. Yes, I doubt he would have given them all, then; if—if, *she* had not been—*herself*; if the dream of long ago could have been dreamed out.

Yet he kissed, ere he laid it aside, the gift of the grateful child. Then, I grieve to say, the thought that came upon his riches was, revenge.

Revenge! O short-sighted and much-purposing man! You should plan, and lay snares, and meditate—you who see so far, and know so well the paths you are bound to tread.

Sweet Kate sent him luck, he thinks: he owes it to her that he fell in with him who put him in the way of fortune.

And he seeks revenge—on whom? if not on one who stole the sister from her broken home, who robbed her of her speech by cruel violence, who at this time he deems his benefactor, who keeps lavish house, and leads an idle life of gain upon the price of—the hackneyed phrase would be—her innocence—I cannot think but that is gone, when the soul has succumbed to the body's vanity, so far the woman makes it do the frail thing homage—surely the dissoluble earth should not raise the chief clamour on its departed virtue, when the immortal was betrayed before and suffered silently.

The weeping for the pilfered innocence is usually o'er late in the day. When the drawbridge was lowered, and the gates left unguarded, was the moment to cry treason—'tis late when the enemy's standard floats from the turret.

PART THIRD. FINDING.



CHAPTER THIRTIETH.

HOME AGAIN—FAME.

Home again ! home again !
 From a foreign shore ;
 And oh ! it fills my heart with joy,
 To seek my friends once more.

SONG.

Blow the trumpet, spread the wing, fling thy scroll
 upon the sky ;
 Rouse the slumbering world, O, Fame, and fill the
 sphere with echo !

M. F. TUPPER.

YEARS had passed, fraught with more change than we have yet spoken of, to all the actors in this tale, when he, who had left his native village a dissatisfied and ill-used lad, stood once more upon his native land—a tall, sturdy, dark-bronzed man, to whom had fallen a share (though a small one,) of the world's good fortune: enough to enable him without shame to seek old ties and faces once familiar; yet not sufficient to lift him in any sort above those memories of younger days.

No one certainly would have traced any resemblance

between the Will Darby of the sunny nook at Piert's Rest, taking his farewell of the baby Rose,—and the hardy mate of the good ship *Grace* (lying in the Docks), from the deck of which he now sets foot for the first time since that runaway scheme, these nineteen years or more.

With mixed feelings enough the man looks forward to revisiting the old scenes, scarcely knowing whether pain or joy predominates, anxious to learn what changes those years have wrought,—permitting now the thoughts free vent that he has so long stifled. Be certain, it is not inclination that holds Will Darby in town some days after his arrival, where to his knowledge he has no friend nor kin. But there are duties to be fulfilled; and it was the first lesson he learned in his career, that duty must be first with him who would not be last in the race. So Will stayed; and as the affairs of the ship were not dependent wholly upon him, and as other people were in no particular hurry to leave London, day after day found him still there, with many hours of each unoccupied—yet the business unconcluded.

“Who and what is this great ‘Horse-tamer’ that I see in all the papers, and everywhere about?” Darby asked one morning of an acquaintance at the Docks. “Not a step can one stir, but on every wall and hoarding one meets those monster letters, six feet high, staring one in the face. In the paper, first thing when I take it up, there it is—two columns all about him this morning; and hang me, if there isn’t a great picture of him in my berth yonder at the hotel.”

“What! haven’t you seen him yet?” was the reply. “Ah! you must go and see that. It is the mo-”

wonderful exhibition that ever was,—the *most* wonderful, without exception."

"What's it all about? What does he do?"

"The 'Whisperer,' they call him; it's said he does all by whispering into the animal's ear. He tames, breaks the wildest horses you know in a miraculous short time. No one knows, or even guesses, his secret, though he's been offered hundreds. Fool if he would, you see, when he makes his thousands by it! 'Rich?'—Ah! as rich as a Jew; he must be, for he gets what he asks, and he is just the rage now. Lords and dukes, and princes, and ladies too, are running after him like mad."

"What's his name, then?"

"Name? Here it's in the paper—Steyne, 'Philip Steyne, Esq.' He doesn't like these names they give him,—'Whisperer,' and 'Tamer,' and the like, so I'm told."

"Steyne—" and Darby mused. "I knew that name a long time ago. What was he, I wonder?"

"Poor, quite; worked in these very Docks as a labourer. Hey! there's Jim McCarthy there, he knew him well, the fellow will run on by the hour; but for Heaven's sake don't start him now, he'll never stop. He did Mr. Steyne some good service when he met with an accident here, working when a lad; and it seems he did not forget it, and when the sun shone for him, he helped McCarthy into the place he's got there, and did the right thing by him. But we'll go and see the wonderful man. Where is he? Oh, ay, I see—long prices, nothing under two guineas; but it's worth seeing, so we'll go to-night if you will."

Darby assented, wondering vaguely, and almost

ridiculing his own imagination, that could connect the playmate-lad of the village with the world-renowned man, to whom all London was flocking—to admire and to marvel at! Yet, far from dispersing, the shadowy vision gained substance—haunted him even more; as that night, within the theatre of exhibition, dazzling with the beauty, splendour and gaiety, that thronged it to the very doors, Darby at length beheld the object of all this curiosity. In the athletic and finely developed figure, the dark, sad, yet striking face, the proudly careless air of the man, now bowing to the deafening thunders of applause which greeted him, the mate saw little to remind him of his early friend; yet his eyes strained more eagerly, and he listened intently for the voice which only awaited silence to make itself heard.

What could there be in common with the polished sentences, the well-toned utterance of the cultivated man, and those of the careless boy. No; Darby smiled at the absurdity of his fancy; yet as the exhibitor turned his face momentarily upwards, and passed his hand across his brow with a gesture that, though slight, was habitual, the idea returned upon the sailor with full force, and never again quitted him.

Through all the fearful interest of the evening's display—when the rampant animal, snorting and furious, led on by the united efforts of four experienced men, was resigned into the hands of the daring tamer, to be reproduced by him, in some brief twenty minutes or half hour, gentle, subdued, submissive to his touch—when in their very presence, a less dangerous animal—merely by apparently spoken words and caressing motions—was in like manner rendered docile; and when the gifted ex-

hibitor, in a short address, urged upon them the inutility and folly of harsh measures, as totally opposed to such results, all failed to cure Darby of that anxious fever of suspense. He believed, hoped, feared, and doubted, all at once; but in vain he waited—to approach the favourite that night was impossible. He was surrounded, carried, spirited away, by a host of emulative admirers, to his carriage: and not till the next morning did Darby gain an audience of his younger playfellow, whom he had fought, and shaken hands with, twenty years ago.

A strange meeting—different, indeed, to any Darby had once dreamed of.

That handsome, well-appointed house; that room, where the perfection of quiet taste is combined with comfort—the appliances of wealth and study around him—strike him at once with a sense of the difference in their position, so great, that though poor Darby knows now who is that grave, thoughtful, yet self-possessed man, now rising to meet him as a stranger—knows it is the little Philip of long ago, younger by some years than he—old as he looks now, and sad, and dignified—yet no wonder he hesitates, holds out his hand, then drops it, and returns Philip's kindly bow, yet does not take the chair he offers.

“ You don't know me—it isn't likely—how should you?—perhaps I ought not to have come. We were only boys—it's years ago now—my name's Darby—”

The half-raised hand was taken and held in a firm grasp for some minutes; neither spoke; a servant had entered, made some addition to the breakfast, table and left the room, before Steyne said, “ Yes, it is

indeed a long time. And why have you but just now come to see me, Darby, in all these years?"

He spoke so calmly that the honest sailor felt almost hurt; he had expected something more of old memories to stir him: but Philip had not only in half accepted the teaching of life.

Darby told him how he had but then revisited England for the first time.

Again there was silence, while the host did the honours of his hospitable table.

How we sometimes misinterpret the silence, as well as the words, of our neighbour. At the very moment poor Will was inwardly cursing his own folly at having come to awaken in the mind of the rich man unpleasant reminiscences, and attributing to pride his silence on a topic which Darby knew must be present alike to the minds of both—Philip was seeking how to soften the painful details of his family history, and revolving how best he could requite the attachment, without hurting the feelings, of his old companion and friend.

So they had sat for some minutes; when Steyne rose, and taking from a cabinet a small and beautifully executed painting, he put it before his visitor, saying, "You know it, Darby?" Yes, Darby knew it, his absorbed attention told he did. "They are all there, all at peace," Philip said in a low voice. The sailor looked up, with an exclamation. In a few words Steyne then told his father's and mother's fate, adding what he had learned from Hinton of his sister's death. He had since caused inquiry to be made; had extracted all the evidence forged by the lying prize-fighter, and failing to discover the place of her burial,

yet crediting the story of her death, he had erected, near the graves of his parents, a small monument to her memory.

"They are cared for," he said, "I have seen to that, though I have never yet been there. I shall not täll—till—" he laid his hand upon the other's shoulder; then added, "They will be avenged, Darby."

But the rough sailor hardly listened: the tidings he had just heard were so terrible, so unlike any he had anticipated. The coldness or estrangement of his friend would have less shocked him. In his heart, so long closed during his solitary wanderings to all domestic affections, the image of the innocent child, as he had last seen her, had dwelt with a fidelity unknown even to himself. He remembered her, the light of her home, the idol of her brother; that brother—— he looked up at Steyne, he clasped his hand. "God help you, Phil!" he said; "your grief has been great indeed—forgive me!" He forgot the other was unaware of his thoughts; but Steyne returned the pressure in silence—passed his hand across his brow. In ten minutes more the self-possessed and urbane man, playing the host with earnest cordiality, had locked away his grief with the picture of the old church of Piert's Rest.

He was vexed that Darby would accept no service at his hands, not even the hospitality of his house. But the independent seaman needed nothing, save the assurance of his old friend's good-will, which was strengthened on both sides by the discovery of the tie which bound them in enmity against the vice which had cursed the lives of both; and Philip rejoiced to find in his newly-found friend as zealous a decrier of every form of alcoholic sin as himself.

But Will Darby felt, despite himself, that between his path and that of his old companion there must lie henceforth a wide separation; and with a heavy heart, and but little repining at the fate which would send him again forth upon the ocean in a few short weeks, he quitted the house of his friend to start that evening for the visit home, which the last few hours had robbed of half its joy.

But capricious Fate had put her veto upon his intent, all-righteous as it was; she had other work for him to do.

Arrived at his hotel, he found awaiting him one of the men from his ship, with a face full of anxiety.

"It's Sam, sir, has got badly hurt, unlading; they've taken him to the hospital, and he'd give 'em no peace till he'd seen you. He's got a notion as he won't get over it, and it's like he'd something on his mind he wants to tell you, and nobody else. I believe he's not altogether right in his head, and I beg pardon for troubling you, but he takes on so."

Darby, who was to the full as much loved as obeyed among the men, gave the little required assurance of his sorrow, and willingness to comply with the wounded man's request, and in a very short time was on his way to the hospital, guided by the messenger.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIRST.

A DEATH-BED.

Hark !—that hollow knock—behold the warder openeth.

The gate is gaping, and for thee ;—those are the jaws of Death !

M. F. TUPPER.

WE weary of remarking on the inscrutability of Fate. It required such good-nature as that of Darby to accept unruffled the utterly needless and unjustifiable interruption of his journey, imposed by the groundless fears of a terror-stricken and half-witted man, who imagined he was going to die, and had summoned the kind-hearted mate, as the only friend he possessed in the world ; but that good fellow was only too glad to soothe the fears of his *protegé* with the assurance of his most probable recovery, and that the projected confession might be safely delayed.

I say the summons to the hospital had been so far utterly needless ; yet how singularly by it is this wanderer of years to be connected with matters more nearly concerning others, whom yet the wilful dame ignores in the casting of her many-hued distaff.

He was quitting the building, when the staircase was suddenly blocked by an ascending crowd. Hustling upon one another came young men with faces full of professional eagerness and excitement ; others below kept back the crowd, closing doors upon them ; commands, entreaties, exclamations, mingled with oaths

and abuse—while above all rose the groans and blasphemies of a man borne in a hastily contrived litter, by six others.

Darby and his companion drew back as the crowd, now consisting only of the medical men and attendants, came rapidly on to the accident ward, and they beheld a sight not easy to forget.

A huge form lay strapped upon the litter, stripped to the shirt-sleeves, which were tucked up: blood was pouring from a ghastly gash upon his head, it rained down upon eyes and mouth, dripped from hair and ears, trickled upon his naked arms, tracked the white floor, had mocked at the cloth wrapped in the moment round the wound, crimsoned and soaked it. One eye was closed by a blow, the cheek below swollen to the nose, the lip was cut through to the teeth, with every word the blood gushed from it; yet it hindered not a moment the torrent of horrid blasphemy that the man poured out unceasingly upon all around—upon his antagonist, his bearers, the doctors, himself.

It was necessary to loose him from the straps; but the instant he felt his hands free he half raised himself, struck madly at the surgeons, tore off the temporary bandage, and, but for instant restraint, would have injured some one.

“It’s the Bulldog, the great prizefighter,” whispered one of the young men to Darby; “he’s half killed the other down at Lang Natham’s—but they got him away, Isn’t it horrid to hear the fellow? By Jove, how he bleeds! He’s been drunk these ten days—makes it no better for him.”

The remedies applied had stayed the effusion of

blood, but the fever of delirium was beyond the power of medicine. Gnashing his teeth, glaring with his one bloodshot eye upon them, the wounded boxer raved at one moment incoherently, the next with method and meaning that thrilled even those accustomed hearers with horror.

Suddenly a word that fell caused Darby to start.

"What's that he says?" he cried, and leaned forward to look closer than he had yet cared to do. "Hark! let me hear—let me see him! Gracious Heaven! why it is—yes, it's Tom Hinton!"

"Who wants me?—that's me! I say who wants me?" cried the wounded man, making a desperate effort to burst the bands that held him.

"Speak to him, if you know him; do not excite him," said the surgeon, putting Will Darby forward.

"Oh, it's you, is it? — you, thee's come at last," roared the disfigured bully, gnashing his teeth and spitting forth blood and foam. "Where's my wife, — thee! where is she? Thee want's thee's wench, tha'—ha! ha! I did it, I did so—I took her, I took her—ha! ha!—curse you all, give me the brandy! Hit him fair! I *did* hit fair!—I'll cut out his eyes! Ha, that's done it—he's down!—give me the brandy I say!"

With a violent wrench he broke the bond, and would have sprung from the bed, but in an instant was forcibly restrained; the bandages were slipped, the blood gushed forth; with curses, oaths and threats, the now dying man fought at those who would have assisted him. More than temporary relief was hopeless.

"Curse the wench! bring her here!—if I get at her, I'll wring her head off, as I did the bird! Ha! ha! the poor bird—the singing fool; the snivelling wench—gone with him! Eh, but we're even—come here!" (he evidently took Darby for Steyne) "come here—ha! ha! I said she was dead; dead, not she—a fine thing, my wench, a fine thing to sit in gold and jewels, silks and satins—oh! oh! my Lord Ducie, I frightened her, did I? Ha! ha! ha! 'she can see, if she can't hear'—dead, not she, my sweet Rose!—ha! ha! dead—dead—brandy—curse you!—hit fair!—br-r-andy—d-ead!"

With the last word upon his blood-stained lips, he fell back, flung his clenched fist above his head, and died.

The men looked at one another, in the pause that follows such a moment.

"Thereby hangs a tale," said one, as he turned from the bed.

"Dangerous fellows to keep a man's secrets, eh?" put in another.

"Lord Ducie, that was his patron," remarked a third.

"Yes, but he's just come into the earldom; going to marry, and be cleansed from all unrighteousness; cut one ring, take up another. I say, what a biceps!"

"Ah!—but there was a girl in the case, and Bulldog had helped in it, I should say."

"Something of the kind, no doubt. Don't you remember, by the by, there was talk of a beauty he took over to Paris a year or two back?"

"Yes," said another, as they left the room; "a

dancer, I fancy. Ever seen his place at Paris? It is the thing, they say, and nothing else. He's taste, has Ducie."

"He's a born fool."

"That's not unlikely." Turning to Darby, the speaker asked—"Did you know the fellow? What was his name?"

"Hinton. I had not seen him for years; he was a mason when I knew him."

"Ah, he'd been everything in his time, where brute strength was valuable: fine fellow, he was, but the drink—the drink it was, sewed him up. Now, then, who's for the 'Two Tuns?' all of us? That's right. Good night, sir."

And the moralist, with his companions, left Darby to pursue his way.

Which was, at first, straightway to the house he had so lately quitted, to convey to Steyne the intelligence he had gathered from the ravings of the dying man—ravings which bore too much connection with the facts already known, to be unheeded by Darby. For it had more than crossed his mind to question the truth of Hinton's story when Philip had related it; and he was prepared to credit far more the sad revelation he had just listened to.

But even as he came in sight of the dwelling of his friend, he asked himself, to what purpose should he distract his mind with a recital, which, even if proved fact, would result, but too probably, in the discovery of a sister's shame? "It will only unsettle him besides for business," mused the thoughtful fellow. "At any rate, I'll find out the rights of it myself, and I can but tell him then. A week or so

will make but little difference in my going down home. God knows but I may be sent to save her ; the poor thing may be sick of her life, and glad to see a face that cares for her. If I can serve her, aye, to the last drop of blood in my veins, how thankful I shall be !”

He turned back ; and, when morning broke, was far upon his journey of discovery.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SECOND.

A CONFSSIONAL—WHERE FAME IS DISTANCED.

"For there are brighter dreams than those of fame,
Which are the dreams of love! Out of the heart
Rises the bright ideal of these dreams,
And I, born under a propitious star,
Have found the bright ideal."

.

"And when thou wast gone, I felt an aching here,
I thought I ne'er should see thy face again,
I loved thee even then, though I was silent."

.

"Yes, I *do love thee*, as the good love heaven;
But that I am not worthy of that heaven.
How shall I more deserve it?"

LONGFELLOW.

"AND you love me, Kate?"

He raised the blushing face that was bent down from him, and laid it on his shoulder. "The truth—I know my Kate will speak the truth, does she indeed love me?"

A little closer nestled the head, with its thick clustering ringlets, and the lips just whispered to the ear they almost touched—

"Dearly, dearly."

He folded her nearer in his arms; his grave, sad face, lighted up with gladness, as he bent his head to kiss hers, where it lay upon his breast, and for a few minutes there was the silence of perfect happiness.

"Let me see the dear face," he said, gently lifting it. The blushes had died away, and the honest eyes

were raised to his, brimful of love and joy, as he held her in his arms.

Looking down into their depths, reading the undying tale there written, did he think of others; dancing, bright, fickle, where long ago he had conned his first lesson? If he did, it was but to scorn the weakness and scant wisdom of that past; to draw a bitter comparison between the false and the true, to laugh—as all men have done, or will live to do—at the poor fleeting shadow, named first love.

“Bless you, my beloved one,” said Philip, seating her on the couch, still standing by her side, one hand resting on her head, the other clasped in hers. “You have made me happier than I thought I ever could be in this world again,” he said. “I did imagine at times you cared for me, but then I could scarce believe it possible. How was it, dear love, you ever came to think anything of a sad, grave fellow, like myself? you with so many gay flutterers for ever about you.”

“I think it was that very thing,” she said, in a low voice, but in her old frank manner: “you were so different to all those whom my aunt was always holding up to me for admiration and imitation. Oh, I wearied so of them; they were all the same; they seemed to set value only on that I cared nothing for—there was so little reality about them. My very heart ached, Philip; for truth, and earnestness, and nature—that which I loved, they laughed at—it was vulgar, or unfashionable, or improper: I could not be like those about me; often when I tried, my very soul seemed to reproach me with falseness and treachery to my better self. My aunt called me sullen and proud, when I sank back into myself, when I could not accept the empty, shallow attentions of those flatterers abor-

me. Indeed you know I was not sullen, nor proud ; I wanted to be happy and pleasant with them—but oh ! I knew, I knew I was an heiress, Philip ; I knew, but for that, how little worth would have been all the good qualities they pretended to find in me, and I once told my aunt so. Ah, you know it was no use, she always said the same thing—that the backwoods had spoiled me. She always called America the backwoods, though I was sent home when I was quite a child. Oh, I often wondered, if I had all at once become poor, how long Mr. Albert Finch would have continued to make verses to my beauty, as he was pleased to call it.”

“I thought once my Kate was to have been the Honourable Mrs. Finch.”

She glanced archly up at him.

“You never did, indeed, Philip. Ah, my aunt was enraged when I refused him, for he was her favourite.”

“How much more, if she had known it was to give the preference to the poor dock labourer. Kate, can you bear to think of that?”

“Think of it? Oh, Philip,” and her eyes sparkled, “am I not proud of every thought of you?”

“But Kate, I rose by no merit of my own. Honesty, and industry, and determination, had availed me nothing, till mere accident threw in my way this secret unknown to others.”

“Is it no merit of your own that not a poor man who knew you, when you were poor, but now blesses your name? Would you ever have succeeded, as you have done, without courage and bravery? What would the Honourable Albert Finch have done, even with your secret?”

“You are partial, my Kate. But tell me, did you

really remember me for the same—the working lad to whom you gave the necklace?”

“Who saved my life,” she added hastily, with a slight blush.

“Oh, yes, I knew you—I remembered the name first. I wondered could it be you, when they told me you were coming to dinner. My aunt had forgotten all about it, I daresay, for it was a long while you know; she was in such a flutter at receiving the famous and wealthy man. How she fêted and flattered you. I remembered you at once; and I know I felt sorry, for I thought you would be now like the rest of them. But, oh, Philip, how soon I learned the difference. And when I heard you talk, all you said was so opposed to what I knew were their conventional notions; and often when you spoke, it seemed just echoing what was in my mind, only that I could not have formed my feelings into speech as you can. Then I was so glad you had come, so glad I remembered you, and that you had saved my life. And when I noticed the look upon your face, as if some great grief were down deep in your heart, I did so wish I could do something to make you happier, though I believed you had forgotten me.”

She laid her cheek upon his arm, and he stood looking down at her in silence.

“Forgotten you, my girl,” he said, after a pause, and looking round the sombre old dining-room; “do you believe I have ever forgotten this room? this very couch, Kate, on which you sit.” It was the same where, years ago, she had flung off her hat to weep petulant tears alone. “See;” and he took out a pocket-book, and drew from it the tiny coral chain.

"It would not fit your neck now," he added, "so I may keep it. It does not look as though I had forgotten you: it would have been indeed a rare coincidence had my friend chanced to introduce me to yours, so early in my career, had I not sought the introduction. Forgotten you! I am not apt at protestations, Kate—we soon learn, in the world, how little they often mean—but it is long since I have found my only happiness near you—aye, dear one, before I dared hope you could love one so much older, so worn by trial and trouble. Will you believe me, little girl, if I say that many a night of agony and loneliness was soothed by the memory of that dear face, as it spoke those few words at the docks that hot summer afternoon? Sympathy was a novelty to your now proud lover, Kate. Yes, love, my life has indeed known a heavy grief—in its earliest hopes, in its best affections, hurt the most cruelly; past chance of cure, past possibility of forgetfulness. I have seen the best and highest purposes crushed pitilessly, while the vilest aims were let prosper—the gentleness and beauty of some natures turned to their very punishment, that the base and unprincipled might flourish and grow great upon their ruin. I have grown doubting, Kate—harsh, and hard of belief; yet, oh, from what greater depth of miserable despondency, of despair, of hatred of life; belief in your truth, your real nature, *yourself*, has saved me."

His eyes glowed, earnest love and warmth suffused his handsome face.

She saw him now before her, as in her heart she always saw him, reading his nature by the light of her own.

"Oh, if I may always hear you say so," said she; "if I may always be permitted to ease your griefs—to make your life more pleasant—how proud, how happy I shall be!"

"You, the heiress? For, Kate, I must tell you I am not rich—a large part of my wealth has been spent in carrying out the purpose of my life. I shall not be for years the man of fortune many take me for."

"I am glad of it. I think, Philip, you care as little for riches as I do, but I shall have plenty for us both; they tell me I am rich. My father is coming from America soon; he never refused me anything."

"So he does not refuse you to me, dear one, we need no more. Never fear, Kate, though not the millionaire your aunt I fear supposes me, I am not quite a poor man."

"I could almost wish you were," she said quietly, "that I might be the one to help you——."

"And the world name me fortune-hunter. But I do love you, Kate, so well, I could even trust you in that to read me aright, were it so."

"I know you would, and prove your love by doing so," she said. "Oh, I know so well——."

"I have wondered to myself at times what Mrs. Caslin would say, could she know me for the same she once received so differently in this room, Kate."

"You are so high in her esteem, it would perhaps make little difference," said Kate.

"Yet she would scarce approve your dear loving confession, I suppose, my girl; 'twould savour of the backwoods, I imagine, in her eyes."

Kate shook her head.

"She has often told me, no woman who knows what

is due to herself will ever let any man, even her husband, think she loves him."

"Knowing how seldom they can do so with truth, perhaps," said Philip, with some bitterness. "But, Kate" (still holding her hand, he sat down beside her) "I will not have you self-deceived; you shall know me for what I am. Do you know that I have for years held in my heart a plan of vengeance against the man through whom came the ruin of my family? Do you know that from the hour I vowed myself to revenge them I have never said the prayer I learned at my mother's knee; for how could my lips belie my conscience before God?—and I have not forgiven. Do you know that in all my triumph of success—yes, even in my love for you—I have not lost sight of this? That I have learned how best to strike him—that I have gathered into my hands every link that connects him with prosperity, and that to-day he is at my mercy; one word from me can cast him into poverty and humiliation. Do you know all this? and knowing it, can you love me?"

There were tears in her eyes, as she raised her face to him.

"How much you must have suffered, Philip, to turn your kind heart to such bitterness. Oh, it was cruel! He must be a hard, bad man, to have made you feel so."

"And you cannot love me, knowing all this?"

"Love you less, because you have suffered," she said, very quietly. "Oh, Philip, even if I might wish you could think differently—even if I might believe we should try to forgive—oh, what am I, that I should judge any one, and, least of all, one I love?"

I, that have had no chance or temptation even for a hard thought. I judge you—I, that must look up to you for guidance and for truth. And, dear, if my love can make you happier, and life pleasanter, so you may come to love all in it, and to think perhaps brighter things—and in my love I will so pray, dear——.”

Her voice failed, she tried to go on, but she was weeping, out of the very fulness of her loving heart.

“My bonnie Kate—my own loved darling!” cried Philip, as he drew her to his breast. “If I were indeed but worthy of such love! My Kate, your life has been almost as lonely a one, in all its luxury, as mine in its hardships; but, oh, the future shall be happy, if love can make it so; yes, my own true loving heart, destined indeed for each other, what shall ever part us!”

* * * * *

So we all—set finger-posts at cross-ways—blunder and faint on the benighted heath—pore on the compass in the desert; or gaze into the stars, seeking a track across the ocean—puzzling, bewildered, doubting in the finite—yet plan, set forth, define, the infinite to BE.

A few years back, and he, this same, half broke his heart upon the cruel fate for which he now blesses Heaven; that preserved him for such love as this. He has forgotten—though 'tis not yet the span of a young life—when, upon a new-made grave, stood an orphan boy, who in the indignant passion of his heart defied the betrayer of his family, and spared not in his anathema the unconscious infant in its nurse's arms. The man, whose fate he now holds within his hands—the babe, a woman, he clasps to his heart as its destined and life-long companion, Kate Crichton.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THIRD.

PASSION'S HARVEST.

"Oh fatal beauty ! Too much seeming heaven !
Hath it wrought thee but this ?—that men henceforth
Shall name thee murd'ress !"

ANON.

"Better is death than life ! Ah yes ! to thousands
Death plays upon a dulcimer, and sings
That song of consolation, till the air
Rings with it, and they cannot choose but follow
Whither he leads. And not the old alone,
But the young also hear it, and are still."

GOLDEN LEGEND.

"HEY, Marquis ! why you've more the air of a man going to be hanged, than one just come from paying his devoirs at the shrine of a beauty."

"Beauty ! say fiend !—hanged ! I should have been hanged, or some one else for me, if I had not beat a retreat."

"What ! fairly ran for it ? Never let it be said that the gallant Dumesnil turned his back upon a fair daughter of Albion !—but in faith, you do look scared, upset—what you'd call *abîmé*, I suppose. What is it all about ?"

"About ! about that she-tiger you've only a quarter tamed. Tell me of her no more, I would not approach her again for a kingdom !"

"Ha! ha!—and how did the belle so scare the invincible Alphonse? Tell me now, did she slap your face? pull those cherished *favoris*? or has she at last really discovered the gift of speech, and launched out in the choicest idiom of feminine English?"

"There is no joke at all, Ducie, I will assure you. If the girl had harmed me only, I should not have come to you: but it is worse—much worse!"

"Speak, then: has she smashed my Sevres ware, demolished the hangings, let fly at the mirrors?"

"The breakfast was on the table when I entered the room; she was alone of course, and she started up, thinking it was you, no doubt."

"Ma belle!—always was attached to me, poor little thing!" And the young noble surveyed himself with complacency in a mirror.

"Of course I acted on the hint you had given me. But she must have had a notion of something before: for I had hardly begun with my finger-talking, before she sat up, fixing on me those grand burning eyes of hers. She made no sign, but took all so quietly I thought the battle was won, and leaned over to take her hand—when—Mon Dieu! I tremble as I recall it!—she sprang from the couch, seized a small knife that lay near, and drew it across her arm."

"Good Heaven!"

The blood gushed out from her fair flesh, and there she stood; while it dropped down upon her white robe—glaring at me with a smile like a devil's."

"What did you do?"

"Do! roared like a thousand bulls, and your people came rushing in, thinking, I believe, that she'd murdered me; as I am certain she would, had I made one

step towards her, for she kept the knife in her hand till her women got about her to bind it up."

"What an infernal spirit!"

"Spirit! I would not be in your place if she's to be at liberty; it will be a poor chance for your pale-faced countess that is so soon to be."

"Confound the girl! I'll go with you, Dumesnil; she will hear reason."

"Hear the prophets! I'll not go near her again; no, not if you would engage to pay all my debts, and give me absolution into the bargain, for a twelvemonth to come, Ducie, not I!"

"But, Marquis, you promised, you wished—"

"Doucement, my friend, softly.—I never bargained for the incarnation of a fiend in the form of an angel. Your sweet dame I knew not would turn out a veritable vampire. Ma foi!—I shudder when I think."

"Pshaw! the pet of a moment! She never made such an exhibition before."

"Probably for the reason her angelic tendencies have not been provoked. I sympathize with you, my friend; but I can offer you no assistance which would peril my own bodily and everlasting welfare. Such maladies are contagious, and if that she-devil failed to assassinate me I should certainly annihilate her some fine morning. No, my good lord, peace before all things; though in faith your dumb mistress is lovely enough to outweigh many considerations, could she be tamed?"

"She was always gentle enough with me."

"By my faith, then, why cast her off? the world is wide enough for pale-faced countesses and mute hâles."

"It cannot be," returned the other, impatiently; "the family is proud, jealous—"

"Has influence, wealth—ma foi! which milord Ducie needs—eh bien!" The friend yawned and shrugged his shoulders.

The other walked to and fro, knitting his brows angrily.

"A cursed nuisance; when one wants to do the right thing, and to have done with all these follies, to be thwarted by the whims of a frivolous creature like that. Confound it!"

And he stopped, in his walk, to grind his heel upon a little trinket, which in his vexation he had jerked from his watch-chain. A frail nicknack which had been attached there, by that "frivolous creature," some time past: and that, with lover's kisses, he had vowed he should never part with.

You see it was enough to ruffle his lordship's illustrious sense of justice. For what reason was there that, because for a time it had made his supreme pleasure to feed the whims and pamper the caprice of this frivolous creature—what possible reason was that for his not throwing her away, when he had resolved on taking another woman, whose wealth and connexions were so immensely convenient to him—whom he should also vow and swear to, though in a different place of course—when he had resolved on giving grand entertainments, purchasing estates, building mansions, founding churches—on making laws, and instructing his poor "lower" fellow-men how to live virtuously—weeping over their want of natural affections, when they belaboured their wives and neglected their offspring—in a word, on "reform-

ing?"—When my lord had all this in view, it was enough to vex him, to find that the gewgaw, the frail nick-nack he had attached, wouldn't be shaken off, couldn't be ground under heel.

"I'll go and talk to her; try what reason will do, for once in a way; eh, marquis?"

Dumesnil shrugged his shoulders. "Diamonds generally go further than reason, with a woman—at least I have found it so; but you might try."

"Diamonds! she's no lack of them. By Jove, what I have spent in that quarter would have kept two establishments; but, there, it is useless talking here, I'll go. No, I can't, though, to-day; I have to meet Lady Mary's brother-in-law, I promised to ride with him; mustn't disappoint him. And it won't do, either, to leave that fury to herself. By Jove, you know, now she's roused, she'd be capable of anything; and those lazy fools about her, she'd frighten them into anything! the women—I say——"

"The Lady Countess included," laughed the Frenchman, who certainly did not sympathise the more deeply with his friend's dilemma that he had so nearly been involved.

"I will send a message of pacification, and promise to go to her to-morrow. She must and shall hear reason."

So saying, he proceeded to despatch a confidential servant to the hidden paradise of his discarded peri.

"Au revoir," said his friend, with a shrug of his elegant shoulders, and a gleam of his white teeth. "I wish you well out of all your complications."

The young lord made him a friendly adieu; and as

the door closed upon him, cursed him for "a selfish fool." * * * * *

Again we are in the luxurious boudoir of the isolated beauty.

Time has passed since last I showed her to you—the worshipped idol of her selfish and unreasoning possessor; and time has, it should seem, but added to her beauty; as with the opening rose, we watch so tenderly, we believe the present to be its acme of perfection, till to-morrow a new leaf unfolded, a spray of moss or tendril freshly bidden, thrills us with its claim, and makes the past seem poor.

So with the beautiful woman now reclining on the couch before us, in the fulness of full budding beauty and luxurious grace.

She was dressed with careful splendour. Always tasteful, to-day time and unusual study had been bestowed in the selection of her attire. Silks, lace, and jewels of the most costly kind, formed her attire; her magnificent hair dressed with natural flowers, in the mode, but without powder, shone like gold in the stray sunbeam that made way through the fragrant shrubs and muslin which curtailed the windows.

One beautiful arm was bandaged, the ribbon half concealed by a heavy bracelet of gold and pearls. The other hung listlessly down, her hand almost touching the floor. As she had lain herself carelessly on the couch, part of her rich dress was crushed beneath her—she lay, her eyes closed, her lips parted, her cheeks now flushed, now pale—waiting anxiously.

No longer a girl—no longer a novice in luxury and wealth—long ago accustomed to all that dress and homage, and the flattery of passion can yield, what was left her? Vanity, the sustaining principle of her life, wounded—Pride crushed—alone, with the mighty sense of her inexplicable wrong—palpitating beneath the sense of injustice she could give no voice to—suffering how much more that no human ear could ever listen, no human voice give comfort, to her anguish.

She started up suddenly, as if some sound had reached her. By what sense unknown to others do those so bereft supply, to some extent, the place of more perfect organization? She hurriedly approached a small recess near the couch where she had been sitting, drew yet closer a heavy curtain which fell across it, instinctively looked into a mirror, and smiled as she adjusted the flowers twined in her wealth of golden hair.

The smile was yet upon her lips, as she turned at the opening of the door. It is not in the nature of mortal man to resist the magic of such a vision of beauty as advanced to meet the new-comer; every word of impatience must have perished even in intent, as, admiration lighting up his features, he hurried to embrace her.

"Ma belle, you grow more lovely every day!—you do, by Jove; I am glad I am come—glad that ass Dumesnil didn't come. Eh, what have you been doing to make yourself so surpassingly beautiful? By Jove, there is nothing like you in all France—no, nor England either."

He had seated himself; and she close to him, with

a studious *empressement* of attention, replied in her own mute language of signs and caresses.

"So fearfully hot it is, *ma belle*, a perfect sirocco; I've ridden like fury, too; and I am just done up—I'll have some wine."

But she had anticipated him. Wine was at hand upon a side table, with fruit and numberless delicacies. She signed to him that she had eaten nothing that day, that she might eat with him—she poured out and handed him the wine, which he drank lavishly and with a sort of desperation, as though nerving himself to something he had resolved upon.

"Dear Beauty," he said to her, you are a perfect queen to night—I never saw you so lovely: but I say, why couldn't you be so with the Marquis?—you know he is a good fellow, and he's fond of you."

She started as she caught his meaning, and half drew her arm from about his shoulder.

"Hey! by Jove!—good Heaven! here!—why it's blood!—oh from your arm—see, it's bleeding on to my vest too!"

Beauty, with a slight gesture of impatience, fixed the bandage and stopped the bleeding.

"By Jove it turned me sick! Some wine, *ma belle*. Ah that ride under the broiling sun did me no good:—I'll rest my head here so—that's capital. Eh I wish there were no countesses, nor money, nor sisters, nor interests—bother it all. *Ma belle*! you are worth 'em all. You shan't go; confound it all, you *shall* stay with me, queen; so you shall."

The woman smiled bitterly as he made her understand; she poured out the wine for which he asked, full and deep draughts; she only sipped.

The twilight came on, the air grew hushed and heavy with the perfume of night. An imprisoned insect droned in the network of the curtains. Overcome by wine and heat, the young nobleman dozed, one hand locked in that of the woman as she sat beside the couch, with drooping head and eyes half closed.

In a while she gently unclasped her hand, softly she rose, locked the door, drew over it the heavy velvet hangings, and across the closed windows. The grate was already covered by lace and silken drapery. Then from the recess she took a small brazier, or chafing-dish filled with charcoal. Still moving like a shadow, or fairy presiding at a mortal's dreams, she set it on the floor close to the couch, cast into it one of the smouldering pastiles, watched for a minute the lurid glow spread and kindle slowly through the mass, then softly placed herself upon the couch, beside the sleeper, and laid his head upon her breast. He muttered "Ma belle"—"some wine;" but with a whisper she soothed him. Gently she drew around the couch the canopy which hung above it, thus closing in effectually the atmosphere of death.

As she laid her head back upon the cushion, with a sudden movement she pulled from her hair the flowers they had dressed it with, and flung them down; they fell upon the burning charcoal and were consumed.

The twilight deepened, the night-fly buzzed heavily. Suddenly there was a gasp—a sob; but the woman's arms drew closer, and a breath passed her cheek, as the head rested passively on her breast. * * *

* * * * *

Now spur horse! draw not rein! and spare not pro-

mises, Will Darby!—while there is life there is hope, and she you seek yet lives. Yes, that is the goal of your journey, that is the prison paradise, and the perished is still of this world, that breath which stirs the dead man's hair * * * *

* * * *

Darkness falls, and the droning night-fly has it all to himself; the air is heavy with more than the perfume of night.

Stand we aside, as the curtain is undrawn; for he remembers her when she was a little child—and sinless.

Poor, lovely clay! it looks full pure and stainless now; the deep eyes half unclosed, the lips apart, as though it lingered for a parting word. Passive, too, and calm—the turbulent fire gone out. Good Christians do not see it so, and righteously visit their indignation upon the senseless limbs and body that have suffered punishment—the real culprit having escaped their vengeance.

So, in a foreign land, Rose Steyne's grave was made, and Will Darby stood beside it. May tears of as true sorrow fall into yours and mine, and memories as sacred be ours, as bore that secret out into the waking world, to share the days and nights of that man's life to come.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOURTH.

DEAD SEA APPLES.

"Shake hands for ever—cancel all our vows ;

And, when we meet at any time again,

Be it not seen on either of our brows,

That we one jot of former love retain."

DRAYTON.

IF ever man had cause to congratulate himself upon the accomplishment of all his desires, and the fulfilment of more than his hopes, Philip Steyne, at this time, certainly was that man. Fame, wealth, distinction waited upon him. The love of a girl who seemed calculated to answer even the fastidious requirements which a man—jilted in his first attachment, a dweller in the world, and a keen observer of the feminine portion—invariably comes to entertain—without obstacle or hindrance, was to be his. Within his reach he held the coveted object of his life—the power of revenging himself upon the man he mortally hated—though attained, as Steyne had told Kate, at the cost of a large portion of his newly-acquired fortune.

For Crichton, soon after the death of his wife, whom he lost while their child was yet an infant, disappointed in obtaining the handling of the property which his wife's mother bequeathed absolutely to her granddaughter, had entered somewhat rashly

into speculations which failed in realising what his money-loving nature deemed a fair return. Hungering after that of which he had so long anticipated possession, as almost to consider its other disposal a wrong to himself, he ceased to regard his business as a sufficient means of compassing his desires.

The gold mania was just then in its birth. From the sea-port towns around came wonderful tales of fortunes realised at one lucky stoop. Nuggets were the trophies preserved for exhibition. Bleached bones and broken hearts, other results of the enterprise, were taken less into account.

Crichton, restless and ill at ease, neglected the present gain in contemplation of the probable. The business began to decline in profit. Finally he came to a resolution, disposed of his business, let his houses, turned all his available property into cash, and departed with his little girl for the land of gold.

Here his shrewd and uncompromising business habits stood him in good stead. He traded with considerable success, and had cause to congratulate himself on his determination—the “Admirable” making light of such small matters as comfort, or his child’s welfare, against the great aim of his existence.

Then came the reaction. The moment when it was discovered that all that had been won was not worth the cost of life and health, the mania set the other way. Money was no longer to be made wholesale. Crichton had formed an intimacy with some other trading adventurers, like himself, who at this juncture persuaded him something was to be done by a capitalist in America, in the buying, stocking, and transfer of farming lots.

Thither, then, still carrying with him his child, the money-lover sailed, and before long was engaged in new speculations.

Meanwhile, the family of his deceased wife woke up to the conviction that a certain representative of it, a respected and wealthy member (a heiress, as she would one day be) was roaming the world under guardianship not the most desirable or suitable. The aunt of the once pretty silly gentle girl—too well born and too well intentioned to have shared the fortunes of such a man—wrote a letter full of condescension and haughtiness, which would have insulted any other man, but fell like primroses upon a rhinoceros's hide, against the "Admirable," requesting permission to take charge of her grandniece.

The father, whose paternal instincts were not inconveniently strong, and who would by no means stand in the way of interests so intimately allied with his own, readily conceded the request; and little Kate, at the age of five or six, returned to England, to the rigid guardianship of her stately aunt, the discipline of Russell-square, and the perpetually recurring condemnation of any real or fancied acquisition of the "backwoods." Passing constantly by her aunt's name—who, as a matter of course, deprecated all allusion to a connexion she had never approved—it was not singular that Steyne should, even in the intimate relations he had assumed with the family, have remained in ignorance of the unfortunate *dénouement* which awaited the history alike of his love and revenge.

At first having sought the introduction, in the natural wish to renew an acquaintance so singularly

commenced, to discover how far he should be remembered, and with certainly no unwillingness to present himself under a more favourable aspect to the young creature who had retained no small hold upon his memory, Philip had not been many times a visitor when he found himself attracted by more than the mere pleasure of an agreeable friendship. In vain he represented to himself the difference of age, the circle by which she had been constantly surrounded, the few advantages which he could possess in comparison—As Kate had naïvely and unconsciously expressed it—there was the inexplicable attraction, the affinity of being, and comprehension—at which we wonder, discuss, and are profound—when we behold them in the varied atoms, out of which Nature works harmony and completeness in the material world; yet of whose necessity we seem to make so little account in the immaterial—nor to their absence lay the fierce disruptions, the jarring discords, and the cruel wrecks that hearts and souls make, not unfrequently.

But these two love very dearly—a marriage is decided—subject always, of course, to the consent of the lady's father, who is expected home daily from America, where his affairs have not been flourishing of late; and he is understood not to be so rich as when he went out. But, as the elder lady says, that is nothing to her niece, who has a fortune of her own, about which, of course, the lover is indifferent; having sufficient, and knowing how very little a woman whose love he can have won will care about more than sufficient. The aunt is grandly busy about all the preparations so dear to the hearts of ladies, and in her glory, at being left to the sole management: Kate's

only fear being that she will have all much too magnificent: Philip, in her eyes, so far transcending all possible glitter and parade of mortal show, that it is sheer mockery to attempt it.

Mrs. Caslin, in the pride of her heart would, I believe, gladly hasten on the arrangements, and complete the ceremony without waiting for the arrival of the père Crichton, for whom she entertains the smallest minimum of respect; but Kate will in no way hear of such a thing, albeit her father's conduct has not been such as to cultivate the highest sense of affection or esteem.

Philip, too, is far from objecting to delay: he also awaits an arrival from abroad; and in his dreams of happiness there mingles a more than seemly exaltation of the desired goal just visibly within his grasp.

Dear Kate—the only one whose joy has no alloy of unworthy feeling, whose happiness is perfect, and who affects not to hide it—sheds such an atmosphere of sunshine round her, the old house in the Square is radiant, and not a creature but revels in the consciousness of some genial influence enriching their existence.

I am afraid it is not exactly what the ladies would have. I suppose when a girl is going to become the life-long companion and helpmate of the man she loves, she ought to be calling up regrets and memories, and ties she must “sever,” forming wise resolutions, and laying up sage maxims, or looking as if she were—and making the poor man fancy she has half repented her bargain—only he knows better. This no doubt is the right and proper course, but my poor Kate never thought of more but that she was

very happy. She loved Philip with all her heart and soul; and though when alone the sense of wrong and error would obtrude, to dim the full lustre of her prospect, it was quickly banished by the strength of her love, and the hope that by and by her influence with her husband might lead him to take, what her true piety and her heart told her was the right view of his own history, painful as it was.

* * * * *

"My nephew has arrived, Mr. Steyne, and I shall have the pleasure, I suppose I must say, of introducing you; though I need scarcely tell you how very far I am from approving of his conduct, or indeed how little to my satisfaction the connection ever was. However, I am happy to say our dear Kate has been guarded under very different auspices to those which could have surrounded her, even had her poor mother lived. I hear he has indulged in most extravagant speculations, and has indeed entangled himself in serious difficulties: he has already run through more than one fortune, as he certainly would that of our dear girl, but for the precaution of my sister in securing it to her."

So spoke Mrs. C., to whom Philip was about to begin a reply in very different tone to this amiable speech, expressing the happiness he should derive from being allowed to be of service, &c., &c.; when the door opened, and entered—he needed not the introduction of the lady to inform him—Richard Crichton!

Years, we know, had passed; and anxious careful money-grubbing had left even deeper traces than they, on the face of the publican of "Piert's Rest;" but the injured man had dreamed of it, recalled it,

sleeping and waking, too often to have forgotten the detested lineaments.

Not so the other. He would no more associate the world-famous man, the accepted suitor of his daughter, with the poor suicide mason of years ago; whose history had made a small item in the list familiar to him; than he would with the poor orphan whom he had last seen in the criminal's dock, or of whom he had retained perhaps the strongest impression, standing on that fresh-made grave, while the bells rang at the christening of that daughter.

With a little flutter of ceremony, the stately lady had quitted the apartment, unheeding the sudden change which came over one of the two, thus left standing face to face.

Crichton had followed his first acknowledgment by extending his hand, which the other made no attempt to take, but stood for a minute looking at the marked and altered countenance, that so powerfully recalled all the sad history in which he had played a part.

"You!" exclaimed Philip, at length; "*you*, the father of Kate?—impossible!"

"Sir! I do not understand you," said the other, making a step forward: "Certainly, Kate Crichton is my daughter, my only child—I had understood—I was happy to—"

"My God! and is it possible?" cried the other, interrupting him, "that for years I should have pursued this idea, have realized it—to find!—the only creature in the world who loves me!"—He paused, with the old gesture of his hand to his brow.

The other stood gazing in amazement, totally at a loss to comprehend what it meant.

"You are Richard Crichton. I needed no introduction," continued Philip, increasing in bitterness as he went on. "You do not know me, of course not. You will have forgotten, long ago, the man whom for your gain you ruined; home, prospects, body and soul—who finished broken-hearted by destroying himself—whose household goods, even with his blood warm upon them, you stripped from the walls, for money you had lent him; for the need your own temptations caused!—I am that man's son!—I am Philip Steyne! I am the boy who told you once upon that father's grave that if I lived I would avenge him. You have forgotten! *I* never have! I have traced you, I have learned every turn your affairs have taken. I know how, grasping at higher and yet higher gains, you have become involved—have mortgaged, borrowed, snatched at every chance, however feeble, and in vain, since the tide of fate has turned—and by your accursed greed in grasping at more, you have lost all. You owe much, do you know how much?—to many—do you know how many?—To *one*, to me!—I am your only creditor: I, Philip Steyne, the son of that woman you thrust from your door, the woman you helped to murder—the son of the man you ruined—the brother of the girl you sold—I whom you falsely accused, and shamefully branded with the name of a felon—I, sir, am your sole creditor! The idol of your existence is lost to you—you are a ruined man, and at my mercy. See, there, if what I say be true!"

Hurriedly he took from his breast a pocket-book, and threw paper after paper before the abashed and fallen man, over whose countenance came an expression compounded of hatred, anguish, and dismay. It was

indeed true. It needed but a glance at these documents to tell him how completely the determined spirit before him had carried out his measures, and, even at such a moment Crichton could not fail to mark, at what an enormous sacrifice of his own wealth. It boded ill for him. The hopelessness of his position struck him as a blow. He made a fruitless attempt to show some amount of carelessness or effrontery; but his head bowed to the table—he hid his face in his hands. Conscience spoke just then, more plainly than even the man, of his own injuries.

Philip stood contemplating him. This was the moment he had lived for—the grand accomplishment of all his wishes: his enemy humbled before him—full revenge as ever he had prayed for.

There was a quick tap at the door; it opened, and Philip's heart leaped with a sudden pang, as a pale face that he loved stood before him. The voices had been loud; the aunt, vaguely alarmed, had begged Kate to go down, she was sure her father had insulted Mr. Steyne.

He, as pale, scarce more firm, made no step to meet her, as she looked from one to the other, and faintly said, "Philip! is my father ill?" The man half rose from his chair, and made a sign as if he would have deprecated explanation.

"She must know," said Philip, in a voice now calm to despair; "God help us! she must know. Kate," he continued, with desperate firmness, leaning one hand upon the chair in which Crichton had reseated himself, again shading his face with his hands, "I told you long ago of a man, my bitter enemy, to whom I owed the loss of my dearest friends, the

ruin of my home—on whom I was bound to be revenged——.”

He paused; and, almost breathless, she exclaimed—
“My father?”——

“Kate, his hand put my mother from his door, when from a sick-bed she went seeking her little child—in a house where, for his gain, the girl was tempted—from where, stolen or betrayed, I lost her, never to find her in this world again. I stood by the death-bed of my broken-hearted mother, I saw the body of my wretched self-murdered father—my home broken up, myself cast into prison: his hand is in it all!”

“Oh! Philip, Philip, father!”——

The poor girl's voice was choked with grief; what could she say?

“I never dreamed it, Kate; how should I? Yet now it seems so strange I never learned it—and I was planning all the while revenge upon the father of the one I loved. I would have spared you this, Kate; I would have written to you, to tell you of this fearful ending to——.”

She interrupted him with a cry, as she held out her hands as if to stay his words—

“Oh, Philip!”

“Kate,” he went on, more firmly, “we must part—we can never be one. A union so unnatural never could yield but misery. For your sake I give up, for your sake forego that which has been the one great purpose of my life. He is your father—you who have loved me, whom I have loved so well; Kate, I could not hurt him. I have done: I'll strive no more against Fate; let the bad prosper or fail.” He threw

upon the table the papers he had before taken up. "Take them, sir, they are all I have against you; you will know how to value them, I make no doubt; but I trust and hope we shall meet no more. The sight of you is a curse my eyes can ill bear; God knows my life will have little to make it worth keeping now!"

He paused for a moment, his eyes still averted from the pale girl, who leaned, half fainting, against the table.

"God bless you, Kate. Thank heaven we were not married; our parting would have been harder."

"Philip," said Kate, in a voice so sunk and broken it sounded not like her own, "you will never leave me!—you will not go!—you cannot, surely. What have I done? Father, ask him; tell him, father!" she cried, looking tremblingly round; but the "Admirable," true to his instinct, had possessed himself of those precious papers, and made himself scarce. "Oh, Philip! will you leave me all alone?" said the poor girl, in tones of pitiful appeal that made the stern heart of the man tremble. He moved towards her, and she caught at his hand.

"You will not leave me, you surely cannot. You that I love so dearly—that I have learned to look up to, to trust—that are all the world to me, dear. Where will you go? What will you do? Philip, dear, you have said that you could forgive me everything—that you could not choose but love me; and will you cast me off for that which happened before I was born? Oh, Philip! dear love."

"Kate, spare me—spare yourself. My heart is torn, my very senses seem leaving me; yet, what I say must be. Do you think I do not suffer? God only knows how much. I have loved you as never, I believe, mortal

loved—as never I believed I could love woman born. In you I have found the happiness I never thought to find in the world again: I had looked forward even to forgetting, with you, the grief that had rendered desolate my past life. Think, then, if I do not suffer! Think what the power of my love must be that has made me yield what no other consideration upon earth should have done—the right of punishing him. Kate, do you think, if I looked only to make my own happiness, that I should part from you? But think! think what a union would that be!—the blood of him who robbed me of my sister, who brought that dear mother to her death—that gentle, good, enduring, pious mother—*one*, hers and *his*! Nature would condemn it—she would rise from her grave to upbraid me. Never, Kate, *never*!”

“Yet, if you had not learned this cruel truth, dear Philip, you would not have been less happy.”

“Kate, it can never be; much as I have loved you——”

“You love me still; oh, Philip! you love me still; you cannot but love me, dear; while you live you will love me. What will you do? How will you forget me? How will you drive the thought of me from you?—the poor Kate who loves you, whom you have loved so well.”

He had turned from her, and leaned his face against the wall; she clinging to his hand, still spoke, weeping: “You cannot forget—oh, Philip! I know so well. Have I not read the dear good heart? I know it will pine, and grieve, and break, like my own. For you will not forget me. Our happy days; our long, long, quiet talks; our walks and peaceful evenings, and the hundred things

—the books, the songs, the music—all will remind you. You cannot forget! Philip! oh, do not go—my love! my dear, for your own sake, I pray you! See, listen! oh, do but turn to me!—your poor Kate, that has never, never grieved you—that never will. Oh, Philip! think of the weary days to come and go, and never see me—never to hear me speak. You have said you loved my voice, and will you never want to hear it? and who will take my place, who will so dearly love you?—who'll be your own, your very own, your Kate? Ah, Philip! have you not told me that the world seemed new, and full of happiness, since you had loved me, that was so dark before; and what will it be now? Dear love, it is not I have done you wrong! Oh, hear me! I will go wherever you may wish—I'll leave them all—go to another country. And if at times sad recollections come, I'll strive to comfort you; or I'll wait with patience till the shadow's past. Dear one, let me atone for, with my care and love, a part at least of what others have made you suffer: you never shall regret that you forgave, in me, the faults that have indeed fallen heavily—Oh, do not take away your hand! Philip! *my* Philip! Is there none to speak for me? Oh, Philip——!"

She had sunk upon her knees, in the earnestness of her petition, still clinging to his hand; but he withdrew it; and as she, in the bewilderment of her agony, would have fallen on her face, he lifted her to the couch. Unable to speak, he pressed his lips to hers, in one long kiss; and with a silent adieu to the aunt, who then entered the room, he quitted the house for ever.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIFTH.

THE CONQUEROR.

“ Moments there are in life—alas, how few !—
 When casting cold prudential doubts aside,
 We take a generous impulse for our guide,
 And following promptly what the heart thinks best,
 Commit to Providence the rest ;
 Sure that no after reckoning will arise,
 Of shame or sorrow, for the heart is wise,
 And happy they who thus in faith obey
 Their better nature.”

SOUTHEY.

“ In life’s delight, in death’s dismay,
 In storm and sunshine, night and day,
 In health, in sickness, in decay,
 Here and hereafter—I am *thine* !

GOLDEN LEGEND.

THERE is something amusing in the pertinacity with which the world divests every public character of all claims to the usual incidents and belongings of a domestic life. The most trivial arrangements or movements are always to be attributed to any but the ordinary motives which dictate those of other people.

Thus when Philip Steyne, the unrivalled horse-tamer, suddenly disappeared from the gaze of an admiring and enthusiastic public, and the absence, totally unaccounted for, was prolonged indefinitely, of the thousand-and-one singular and marvellous reports successively floated through the town, not one touched

upon the possibility of domestic affliction, or the many disappointments and mischances that flesh is proverbially and practically heir to.

But, long before the twelvemonth was expired, indignation, annoyance, regret and wonder, had been exhausted; and when eighteen months had passed away, though the huge red posters displaying the name so well known, with the impracticable postures, wholly unknown, still held their ground, at least in part, or fluttered mournfully from lone bye-wall or dreary hoarding—some new favourite held the place in the public mind which the subject of these flaming announcements so lately occupied.

And where was he the while?

I think I have let you sufficiently into the character of the principal of my story for you to be aware that he is not one to falter and hesitate in a resolution once formed. Little as you may be disposed to agree with his determination, you will be certain that it will not be suffered to fail, for want of stern will to bear it out.

One brief, unanswerable letter, Steyne wrote to the aunt of his betrothed, informing her of just so much, in just such terms, as he knew she would fully comprehend and enter into. That lady, in all the agitation and distress attendant upon the altered state of affairs, derived one amount of solid gratification from the fact that it was all attributable in some way to the unworthy nephew-in-law, whom she thereupon renounced with new fervour, and who very considerably lost no time in removing himself from the neighbourhood of her unlimited indignation.

In three days Philip had quitted London; in two

more, England. And from that time, until we again meet with him, he had scarcely slept two nights in the same town or village. At such pace as was compatible with the reputation of sanity, he had traversed the southern countries of the continent, retracing his steps here, continuing his journey there, suddenly quitting this spot, and as unreasonably halting at another, in a style that made it least a matter of congratulation (to be guilty of an Irishism) to the man who did not happen to be his companion. Philip was intent upon doing that of which every day, every hour indeed, seemed but to increase the difficulty; and finally Reason, as if disgusted at such total ignoring of her office, alienated herself from the offender, leaving him in an obscure Swiss village, at the mercy of harpy innkeepers, a raging fever, and the reputation of a rich Englishman.

Not far, perhaps you are thinking, from rightly served, and how much too kind Fate proves herself, when I relate how—the weary probation of that fever passed (you will thank me for sparing you that)—Philip awoke to a delicious sense of convalescent weakness, to find himself surrounded by English comforts, and to hear, in whispered tones, English tongues discoursing of his state hopefully—which speakers, at his stirring, shewed themselves in the persons of a portly doctor and a sweet-faced softly-speaking nurse; an old friend, too—poor Cary Hinton, no other—now a middle-aged and staid-looking, though still pretty woman.

Now you know these surprises are not to my fancy, as being generally beyond reason; and, above all, apt to shake the nerves of fever patients—though I believe no convalescent ever was much the worse for a

pleasant surprise; 'tis suspense does the mischief: and there never was a more blundering notion than, having put the curiosity of a poor irritable invalid on the rack, to attempt to soothe him with, "Now be still, dear; you must *not* excite yourself; by-and-by we'll tell you all about it, when you are stronger. Lie still now, compose yourself, there's a dear." Good Heavens, why you might tell a man of the biggest misfortune that ever befell his house, with less risk than leave him in such a feverish unsatisfied condition as these words will induce. But enough of that. Cary had more sense; the doctor was no sooner gone, than, adjusting the pillows, and administering some precious and delicious restorative or invigorative, especially contrived for the beatification of convalescents, the sick man's nurse began, in a tone more soothing than the completest silence, to satisfy the curiosity she knew must be consuming him.

"You were so surprised to see me here, I know."

A brief affirmative from Philip.

"Yes, yet it's very simple when you come to know. You were bad, indeed, Mr. Steyne, when I came. You will guess who sent me, not but I would have come if I had known, but I was sent by some one—you'll not be much surprised—you have not so many that love you—*she* sent me, sir, Miss Kate. She heard you was very bad in a strange country, and she said to me—I have lived with her, sir, since you went away—she could not bear to think of you being among strangers, and she knew of no one else. So I came: you were bad, indeed, Mr. Philip, and such a pigstye as they'd got you in. They said it was not safe to move you, but I was certain it was worse to

let you be ; so we—so I had you moved here, sir. It's the Protestant convent, at least the sick part belonging ; and here you've been now two weeks. Ah, Mr. Philip, I never thought to have heard your voice again ! You *were* bad !”

Curiosity so far satisfied, the judicious nurse left her patient to quiet and repose.

Perhaps he dozed in that half-hour ; if he did he had not forgotten what had been told him, for Cary heard her name feebly called.

“ Tell me,” he said, when she came, “ how was she when you left her ?”

“ But poorly, Mr. Philip—God bless her ; she is not so strong as she is good, by a long way. And now, sir, you will please rest quiet, sleep will do you so much good.”

A smile of singular meaning rested on the pale face of the nurse as she turned away from the snugly curtained bed, and busied herself with the night lamp.

From the time that Philip, quitting town, had left Mrs. Hinton free of the responsibilities, though still enjoying the revenue attachable to her capacity of housekeeper in his establishment, Kate had sought her out, and retained her near herself in the capacity of companion. She had already learned some part of her history from Philip, under the strictness of whose domestic regulations her unfortunate infirmity had received so severe a check as to render its total eradication matter for sanguine contemplation—and in the present state of affairs Mrs. Hinton had proved herself a valuable acquisition to poor Kate.

Though not directly made a confidante, Cary had guessed quite nearly enough at the real state of the

case, and all the goodness and sympathy of her nature were fully enlisted in behalf of her favourite, in whose service she found herself so unexpectedly engaged.

* * * * *

It is the fourth day from that of his first awakening to the welcome vision we have described, and Philip, an improving convalescent, is sitting in an easy chair, taking the air from the open window of his chamber, half curtained by a thickly clustering vine. His careful nurse has just concluded some communication which has with some ingenuity been extorted from her, and, after again adjusting his wrappings, has quitted the room.

The door upon which the eyes of the invalid are fixed is slowly opened, and there enters the dear face he has so vainly coursed over hill and dale, crossed torrents, and scaled mountains, to escape the memory of. Oh! but how pale, how wan, how marked with more than grief, since last he saw it! Tears come easily when we are weak, and it is no wonder his dimmed the eyes that met hers, that spoke even before the lips uttered—

“ Oh Philip, are you better ? ”

He could not speak, he put his hand in hers, and she knelt down beside him.

“ Will you forgive me ? ” she said, gravely and tenderly. “ I did not mean to have let you know I was here, I begged her not to tell you, for I feared to pain you by the sight of me. For, Philip, I shall never vex you. I did not come you know—understand me please—to talk of that. But those who had met you here told us how ill you were seeming, and how recklessly you travelled. I felt sure some harm would

happen to you. I could not rest—I should have gone mad. At least I thought, ‘I will be near, he need never know it—to nurse him if he is ill, to be near him if he—if, if any harm should come; I cannot offend him then.’ Brimbouche, my old coachman, you know, and Nurse Hinton came with me—my aunt says ‘No’ to nothing now, for me—I came, and the first thing we heard was that the fever had you down there. Ah, when I saw you senseless, ill, with all strange faces round you, how thankful I was I had come! Oh, Philip, but they said you could not be moved, and for two days we watched you there—you got worse—then we believed it was the bad air. With great care they brought you here—you were so ill.”

“You have not been to see me, Kate?”

“Ah! I was in the room the day you first spoke; but I would not let you see me. It was so joyful to hear your voice again, but it banished me. I had done all I could for you, and I knew you did not want to see me.”

He was holding her hands in both of his, looking down into her pale face, half shaded by the soft brown curls, but he did not speak, and she went on:—

“Nurse Hinton has told me about your dear good mother. I do not wonder that you hate even the very name I bear: it is very, very sad. But may I, Philip, please, say something? I have been very wrong in the past, in not speaking what was often at my heart; but my happiness in your love made me always put it from me. Since I have lost you, I have thought of it day and night, and my error has been shown me, —oh so plainly! I have prayed for you, dear Philip, and

for an opportunity, though so late, to speak to you earnestly, and to entreat you for your own sake."

Then, in her simple touching way, full of trembling anxious desire for his peace; she spoke of the past, of his unrighteous longings for revenge, showed him each plan in its turn made futile, each project overthrown, nay, even turned in its bitterness upon himself. Made eloquent by the painful interest in his welfare, by the new light gained in meditation and earnest seeking of the right, Kate besought him no longer for herself, no longer for the fulfilling of their plighted engagement, but for the releasing of his own spirit from the iron captivity of doubts and bad resolves wherewith himself had so long bound it.

"Never," said she, "never shall I cease to reproach myself that I had not obeyed what my own conscience told me so plainly was my duty. When first you told me of the dreadful purpose you cherished, it shocked me.—I felt I shared the wrong in passing it by, not even pleading with you. Again and again the warning would come; but I loved you, and I was deaf to it. Oh, I have seen plainly since how that very love should have urged me to entreat you with all my power to turn from the darkness and vanity of plotted vengeance. How much perhaps might have so been spared us both; for I cannot think in vain I would have spoken and prayed with you, but that your purpose would have changed, your heart softened. But I little dreamed how near home the blow would fall; or that my punishment was at hand."

Then with the simple reverence of true piety, the girl spoke of the All-directing Power that so mercifully thwarts man's deepest laid plans, and by the

special intervention of His mercy most frequently blights the poisonous harvest sown in bitterness and revenge; and lovingly she urged the poorness of the sense that questions so impetuously of hidden decrees, as if it should find all too easy the fulfilling of its already allotted and evident duties; or that, because it sees not to the end, would replace faith with doubt; and of the many mercies and success granted to him she spoke, mingling with her comforting words much of what she had learned from Cary of his mother's loving piety, and trusting, undoubting, life and death.

Sweetly the soothing accents fell from her lips—words of mercy and grace; less like quoted inspiration than as the healing counsel of a heaven-sent messenger to the poor doubting, tossed, long-erring spirit.

How black now seemed the past darkness by the light so shed!—how wide the wandering, how abject, how futile, how presumptuous the doubt!

As the twilight deepened over that sweet pale face, as the gentle tones fell lower, and the earnest eyes were raised, appealing beseechingly, for him—the past, as a troubled mist, seemed melting away—new life, new hope, new vigour, took the place of its fevered visions.

There was silence, for a few minutes; as she ceased, Philip had covered his face with one hand; the other clasping hers. “You are not angry?” Kate said, in a low calm voice; “I could not but speak Philip—you know not what I have suffered, seeing you lie so—thinking you might be taken away, with those dark feelings at your heart. Not for myself—not for any thought of the past dear, have I spoken—that is all

over. But Philip, perhaps, by and by, we may meet to be friends when —— ”

“ Never—my own Kate ! *never !* ” exclaimed Philip, as he clasped her to his breast. “ Leave me no more, my own, my darling. Forgive me ! pray with me ! as you have prayed *for* me. Oh, Kate ! my beloved ! my own.”

* * * * *

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIXTH, AND LAST.

FAREWELL.

"As one, who from a dream awaken'd, straight
 All he hath seen forgets, yet still retains
 Impression of the feeling in his dreams,
 E'en such am I."

DANTE.

BUT a few minutes, patient friend, and we shake hands, our journey ended.

In common courtesy, some few words are due to those who have figured in our company, and still linger on the wayside.

Perhaps because Richard Crichton had learned prudence, perhaps to carry out to the end the mystery which had puzzled poor Philip's boyish brain, the "Admirable" flourished on the money so unexpectedly restored to him; and dying some years after, left the whole of his fortune to the exclusive purpose of the evangelization of the inhabitants of the Tin-chau and Calipee Islands, just then discovered in the remotest parts of the West Pacific. But the isles proving to be inhabited only by a new species of tailless ourang-outang, the result was the throwing of the whole into Chancery, whence it has not yet emerged; and where, in all human probability, it will yet for some time remain.

For a kind, indulgent, spoil-child of a nurse, commend me to Nurse Hinton, with whom Kate is often

STEYNE'S GRIEF.

compelled to interpose her mild but firm authority to maintain due order and restraint.

The total expunging from the household dietary of the smallest atom in the shape of the thing she was wont to covet, has compelled abstinence in Cary; the period of caudle even affording no occasion of indulgence; for if there do exist a creature more absolute in such matters than Philip, is his wife Kate, who in her blooming wifehood offers a spectacle for the commiseration of the strong-souled reformers of her sex; so abjectly does she resign herself to abide only beneath the shadow of his love, with such unbroken faith in his capabilities and wisdom—no born thrall ever dwelling in more firm conviction of submission and reliance. Vain I fear would be the effort to arouse her to a sense of the power which awoke to light, and faith, and the better life, that now proud, happy, and grateful man; or to prove how much he owes her. I suspect her case is hopeless, and the labour of any public-spirited female, who might attempt to convince her, would be thrown away.

The sunshiny little wife dwells in a perpetual delusion of this nature, in which Philip indulges her; and perhaps, for example sake, it is as well. Not all could be so safely trusted with a knowledge of their real power, as she who so totally ignores it. For few, like him so blindly seeking that forbidden, have been, in mercy, foiled, to find that which is, alas! too rare.

FAREWELL.

THE END.

